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NEW PERSPECTIVES ON LATE ANTIQUE IRAN AND IRAQ

EDITED BY MICHAEL PREGILL

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Boston University Pardee School of Global Studies
Institute on Culture, Religion & World Affairs: CURA

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> All URLs for digital material cited in the notes have been checked and updated if necessary.
>
> Arabic and Syriac text has been removed from one article for technical reasons.
>
> The HTML versions of some articles were originally published with hyperlinked glosses and gallery images; these have been omitted, with the text of some glosses edited and inserted parenthetically where appropriate. The images for one article (Daryaee) have been partially retained through integration into the text of the article.

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Editor's Introduction: Eastern Perspectives on Late Antiquity

Michael Pregill

At the sight of Antioch's fall you would start
At Greek and Persian turned to stone
With the fates at large as Anûshirvân
Under banner imperial drives his troops
In sea of armor closing in
On Byzantium's emperor saffron-robed

Al-Buḥturī (d. 248/897), *qaṣīdah* on the Īwān Kisrā[1]

This volume of the peer-reviewed, open access *Mizan: Journal for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations* presents several articles (and a provocative postscript) centering on the theme of "New Perspectives on Late Antique Iran and Iraq." The articles featured here originated with a pair of conference panels convened in 2016. The first was held during the summer of 2016 at the Eleventh Biennial Iranian Studies Conference at the University of Vienna, August 2–5, 2016; the second followed in the fall of that year, convened during the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association held in Boston, November 17–20, 2016. The articles by Touraj Daryaee, Isabel Toral-Niehoff, and Shai Secunda in this volume are revisions of their contributions to the first panel in Vienna; those by Thomas Carlson, Mimi Hanaoka, and Jason Mokhtarian are revisions of their contributions to the second. Richard Bulliet, who has graciously contributed the afterword to this volume, served as respondent at the Boston panel.

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The inspiration for this volume (and the two conference panels that gave rise to it) initially came from the felicitous conjunction of two factors in 2015. First, the Mizan digital scholarship initiative was launched in spring 2015, with the stated mission of "encouraging informed public discourse and interdisciplinary scholarship on the culture and history of Muslim societies." Supported by generous funding from ILEX Foundation and housed in the Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations at Boston University, Mizan was founded to provide an online platform for scholars of Islam and intersecting fields to engage a broad audience, whether fellow academics or the general public, particularly through publications that demonstrate the relevance of historical and interdisciplinary approaches to investigating issues of contemporary concern in the study of Islam and Muslim societies. Second, not long after the launch of the Mizan platform in spring 2015, project management was presented with the opportunity to participate in the Association for Iranian Studies (then the International Society for Iranian Studies) conference in Vienna the following summer. Imagining this as a fruitful venue to explore the topic that is the subject of this journal issue, we soon realized that a single conference panel was inadequate for doing so, which led to the follow-up panel in Boston later that same year. Organizing and convening these panels allowed us to bring a number of distinguished scholars together to explore questions of shared concern on not one but two occasions; in the end, these panels provided us with a very diverse array of contributions on our theme, reflecting the breadth of contemporary scholarly engagements with the subject of Eastern Late Antiquity.

When the Mizan initiative was founded, one of the core areas of research and publication we designated as central to the project was termed "Global Late Antiquity."[2] This topic represents a firm commitment to presenting and promoting scholarship that locates the rise and development of Islam in the context of the late ancient Near East and Mediterranean, particularly by focusing on the ways in which early Islam was heir to, and profoundly shaped by, that larger cultural, political, economic, and religious world that tied together Jews, Christians, Zoro-

astrians, and other communities during the time of Eastern Roman and Sasanian Persian hegemony. Naturally, when one speaks of a "Global Late Antiquity," the underlying issue that self-evidently informs the locution is a concern to emphasize an eastward shift in the study and presentation of the period.

It was especially appropriate that the first of our two conference panels on the theme of "New Perspectives on Late Antique Iran and Iraq" was held in Vienna, for it was here that Alois Riegl, who taught and worked at the Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry (now the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts or MAK Vienna), originally coined the term *Spätantike* or "Late Antiquity." Riegl perhaps could not have anticipated the popularity and wide-ranging application of the term—or, for that matter, the energetic debate over its meaning and use—well over a century later. It is worth remarking here, if only momentarily, that the notion of *Spätantike* as a distinct phase in Mediterranean and Near Eastern history originated with Riegl's attempt to address the hybrid visual style found in the material remains of early Christian or Coptic Egypt—the synthesis of the paradigmatically "classical," "western," and "universalizing" visual language of imperial Rome with that of an Oriental subculture depicted (and to some degree denigrated) as "provincial," "vernacular," and "traditional." In Riegl's analysis, each of these visual idioms exhibits distinctive qualities in their approach to depiction and ornamentation; in the late Roman period, both were suffused with Hellenistic and, increasingly, Christian elements as well, proposing complementary but ultimately divergent solutions to similar problems and challenges met in the process of cultural synthesis.[3]

Thus, at its foundation, the concept of Late Antiquity was originally intended as a framework for analyzing, describing, and gauging the significance of phenomena that are conspicuously interstitial, hybrid, and marginal (or at least are perceived as such).[4] It has until relatively recently been invoked primarily in the study of the late Roman Empire, particularly in analysis of such developments as the advent of the eastern-facing and enduring Byzantine polity centered on Constantinople, the transition to a post-Roman political and social order in Western Europe,

and the impact of Christianization in both the Latin west and the Greek east. However, from the start, various "Oriental" others—Egyptian, Anatolian, Syrian, Mesopotamian—have had to be taken into consideration as well. While Riegl may have taken for granted the centrality and hegemony of Rome and Eurocentric norms of the "classical" in his approach to the period, his and other formative studies of Late Antiquity already contained the seeds of a dramatic expansion of the field—if not the complete subversion of the assumptions that originally informed Riegl's approach.

The study of Late Antiquity has developed tremendously in recent decades, building upon formative scholarship that asserted a distinctive identity to the period between the era of Constantine and the rise of Islam, marking the crucial transition from the ancient world to the Middle Ages and modernity. This has had a profound impact on a number of scholarly disciplines and deeply influenced the way we think about the relationships between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the connections between European and Middle Eastern civilization; and the nature of the period formerly mislabeled the "Dark Ages." While scholars no longer follow Gibbon and other historians who saw this period as largely marked by decline—a placeholder for the transition between a glorious classical civilization and the culture of the Renaissance that is so often seen as birthing European modernity—long-established biases and disciplinary imbalances in the field are only slowly being overcome.[5]

In adopting a more sophisticated and ecumenical approach to Late Antiquity, a particularly pressing task is achieving a greater balance between western and eastern perspectives on the period, with "eastern" defined in the broadest possible way. Similarly, the assumption of a natural emphasis on the third through fifth centuries CE—the era of major transformations in the Roman order, particularly the political decline of the empire in Western Europe, significant institutional changes in the Roman state, and the confrontation between Christianity and polytheism—for defining the boundaries of the period must also be questioned. Once mainly the purview of scholars of the later Roman Empire and associated phenomena, the term "Late Antiquity" now connotes a

much wider nexus of cultures, communities, and socio-historical processes that converged in the Mediterranean and Near East from the Christianization of Rome to the rise of Islam and beyond. This is the direct consequence of the wide recognition that the processes of exchange and synthesis between Hellenistic, Roman, and "Oriental" cultures so characteristic of the period cannot be conveniently constrained by the Roman imperial *limes*. At least since the time of Peter Brown's groundbreaking work in the 1970s and 1980s, Sasanian Persia has been enfranchised as a critical participant in those processes; increasingly, Islam has as well, not least of all as their culmination.

The political, economic, social, and religious ramifications of the late antique cultural convergence are indisputably significant for any proper understanding of western, indeed world, history. Moreover, although regions, events, and communities within the Greco-Roman cultural sphere still receive a disproportionate amount of attention in the study of this period, scholars are increasingly working to incorporate the study of Levantine, Arabian, African, Central Asian, and Iranian communities in their approach to a field that is slowly achieving a more holistic, which is to say global, perspective on the cultural, political, and social dynamics of the era. In term of its central religious dynamics, the spread, institutional development, and eventual hegemony of Christianity still enjoys a certain pride of place in attracting the lion's share of scholarly attention, but the study of other religious communities, particularly Palestinian and Babylonian Jewry, has benefited enormously from integration into Late Antique Studies, and in turn played a reciprocally influential role in shaping the field.[6]

Yet much work remains to be done, and in particular, greater integration of Iran and Iraq into this dynamically shifting field is long overdue, despite the fact that the role of the centuries-long confrontation between the Roman and Sasanian Empires in stimulating the major transformations of the period has been acknowledged by scholars for decades.[7] Long the exclusive province of specialists in ancient Iranian history and philology, Sasanian Studies has in recent years been revitalized by scholars seeking to shift focus and bring the field into conver-

sation with other scholarly discourses. Specialists in both Late Antiquity and Sasanian Iran stand to benefit from bringing these fields into a more profound and fruitful dialogue.

For such dialogue to be truly impactful, it must be multivectoral and interdisciplinary, taking the complex dialectics of the period into consideration. The contributions of Touraj Daryaee and Shai Secunda to this volume both focus on Sasanian Iran, but do so from rather different perspectives; nevertheless, the theme that unites them is the necessity of considering late antique phenomena from a comparative or broadly ecumenical perspective, for the attempt to appraise evidence in isolation will inevitably lead to misprision, if not significant misinterpretation. Daryaee's piece, "The Sasanians and the Late Antique World," addresses a central historiographic question in Sasanian Studies, namely the degree to which the advent of the Sasanians effected a similar transformation in the affairs of Iran and Central Asia to that effected by the Christianization of Rome. Daryaee argues that we must see Christian Rome and Sasanian Persia as not only coeval but coevolving; in particular, both imperial polities articulated ideologies according to which their ambitions of world dominion were justified through claims of direct divine sanction and election.[8]

In contrast, Secunda's contribution, "East LA: Center and Periphery in the Study of Late Antiquity and the New Irano-Talmudica," is a brief résumé of the most critical historiographic questions provoked by the recent flourishing of Irano-Talmudica as a major field of inquiry. As a scholar who has himself contributed much to the growth of this fledgling field, Secunda is well positioned to reflect upon some of the implications of its distinctive emphasis on both comparative work and greater integration with Late Antique Studies, an endeavor marked with both considerable promise and conspicuous pitfalls. The field of Irano-Talmudic Studies largely represents an attempt to bring research on Sasanian culture to bear in illuminating a textual corpus that has by and large been the exclusive domain of specialists working in Rabbinics and guided by its methodologies and priorities.

However, the integration of Sasanian Studies and Jewish Studies has advanced through other types of inquiry as well. Jason Mokhtarian's contribution to this volume, "Zoroastrian Polemics against Judaism in the Doubt-Dispelling Exposition," shows that we must also take the literary perceptions and representations of religious others found in the Zoroastrian textual corpus into account in constructing a new image of Sasanian society. Irano-Talmudica provides us with a window through which that imperial society can be more sharply glimpsed from the perspective of minority groups such as Babylonian Jews, especially as the traditions of the Bavli offer a particular view of everyday social relations in the urban centers of Sasanian Iraq. But we must be mindful that Sasanian society itself apprehended its minority populations in particular ways. The empire gazed back at the Jews, so to speak, as we learn by considering the complementary (or in the present case, rather less than complementary!) perspective afforded to us through the discourse of religious polemic preserved in the Zoroastrian canon.

Given this journal's primary (but by no means exclusive) orientation towards the community of scholars in Islamic Studies, the effort to better integrate the study of Late Antiquity and Islam seems especially important as a recent development in these fields. The rise of Islam is no longer seen as violently disrupting the older Mediterranean-Near Eastern world order or abruptly drawing the curtain on the classical world; the caliphal dominion, especially in the Umayyad period, is now generally recognized as the realization of various long-term historical trajectories that linked Rome, Iran, and Arabia.[9] Admittedly, there can be no doubt that the Arab conquests precipitated both immediate change and long-term transformations. Indeed, Richard Bulliet's conjectural afterword to this volume, "What If the Arabs Had Failed to Conquer Iran?", demonstrates that imagining the hypothetical persistence of a Sasanian polity after the seventh century CE—that is, an Iran that somehow resisted direct takeover by Arab forces after the fall of Iraq—yields an image of both Iran and the Islamic world that is dramatically different from that which is familiar to us.[10]

Yet even those epochal transformations that are generally acknowledged as inevitable may, upon close consideration of the evidence, may seem far less so. Thus, as Thomas Carlson shows in his contribution, "The Long Shadow of Sasanian Christianity: The Limits of Iraqi Islamization in the Abbasid Period," the marginalization and disappearance of Christianity in Iraq may have taken much longer than even the currently prevalent gradualist models of conversion to Islam in the Arab heartland would suggest. The spread of Christianity from the Eastern Roman Empire to Iraq, Iran, and beyond is one of the most underappreciated aspects of religious change in Late Antiquity; the persistence of major Christian communities in Iraq throughout the Abbasid period appears to constitute important evidence of a long Late Antiquity, flying in the face of concepts of the Arab conquests as ushering in rapid and ineluctable disruption of the previous status quo. It is clear that in addressing the legacy of the Arab conquests and the emergence of Islamic dominion and eventual hegemony over what had previously been the Roman-Sasanian condominium over the eastern Mediterranean and Near East, a cautious equilibrium between themes of continuity and change must be sought.

Over the last decade or so, there has been a consistent production of books and articles in Islamic Studies that invoke the term "Late Antiquity." It is an open question whether the popularity of this term in the subfield of Qurʾānic Studies in particular really reflects a substantial engagement with a larger scholarly discourse or recent historiographic developments in that field.[11] However, that the rise of Islam is now widely recognized as meaningfully anchored in the religious and political affairs of the Mediterranean-Near Eastern *oikoumene* cannot be doubted, even though there is still a dearth of significant scholarship demonstrating how the dynamics of the latter meaningfully explain or illuminate the former. Moreover, the substance and ramifications of the long-term continuities between pre-Islamic Late Antiquity and classical Islamic traditions and institutions have still hardly been explored; and work on early and classical Islam perhaps still does not engage Persian-Sasanian concepts, institutions, and materials adequately enough.[12]

While there have been a number of recent publications that seek to explore Eastern Late Antiquity, what perhaps distinguishes this volume is that we have sought to put a particular focus on the Islamic (or "post-conquest") period, on the refractions of older themes and repercussions of older trends up through the Islamicate Middle Ages—Late Antiquity in the longest of *longue durée* approaches.[13] The preeminent example of this we offer here in this volume is the contribution of Isabel Toral-Niehoff and Jesús Lorenzo Jiménez, "Al-Ḥīrah, the Naṣrids, and Their Legacy: New Perspectives on Late Antique Iranian History"; the authors show with great clarity that traces of the culture, tradition, and institutions of late antique Iraq can be detected in rather far-flung settings of the medieval Islamic dominion and beyond. Here it is especially noteworthy that it is the legacy of Christian Ḥīrah, itself a point of convergence for various vectors of late antique culture, that comes to fruition in al-Andalus centuries later. However, it is a mistake to focus exclusively on seeking specific late antique survivals and remnants in the Islamic world at the expense of acknowledging the persistence and adaptation of mores, dispositions, and mentalities across the divide of the Arab conquests.

One of the most persistent legacies of Late Antiquity in medieval Islamic culture was the impact of conceptions of the late antique past itself for defining identity and inflecting worldviews centuries later. Muslims had a keen understanding of themselves as heirs to various classical pasts, whether Hellenistic, Iranian, or Israelite, and were fully aware that the empire of Muḥammad and his community was forged in the foundry of the Roman-Sasanian conflict. The literal remains of that confrontation are the subject of the poem from which the epigraph to this essay is drawn, the melancholy *qaṣīdah* the Abbasid poet al-Buḥturī (d. 248/897) composed in reflection upon the abandoned monumental hall of the Sasanians at Ctesiphon. But figuratively speaking, the mentality informing the poet's backward glance aligns with a characteristically late antique tendency, the impulse to come to terms with the past, reconcile oneself to it, reshape it, and deploy it as an instrument for self-fashioning and

legitimation.[14] That is, Buḥturī's ode on the ruins of the Īwān Kisrā represents a kind of imaginative artifact of Late Antiquity in its own right.

In this vein, Mimi Hanaoka's contribution to this volume, "Local Histories from the Medieval Persianate World: Memory, Legitimacy, and the Early Islamic Past," shows that these local histories from major cities and regions of the medieval Islamic world such as Qom, Bukhara, and Nishapur reflect a delicate balancing act; they engage in an enterprise of modeling authority and legitimacy in reference both to native pre-Islamic traditions and ideals and to the monumental legacy of the Prophet, Companions, and other sainted figures associated with both the conquests and the Arab heartlands of Islam. The degree to which these sources sought to engage and rework foundational narratives and myths of the conquest period centuries later stands in stark contrast with other contemporary textual corpora such as the dynastic histories of Muslim Anatolia Hanaoka considers, which by and large do not engage in fashioning self, landscape, and community according to late antique Islamic models. For complex reasons, the legacy of the late antique past continued to be meaningful in some parts of the Islamic world centuries later, while it was immaterial in other places where different discursive models prevailed.

In closing, a number of acknowledgments are in order. I thank MESA, the Association for Iranian Studies, and the University of Vienna for their hospitality and support for the conference panels that provided the initial basis for this journal volume. The contributors to this volume have been steadfast and patient through a long production process, for which I am especially grateful. Although they were unable to contribute to this volume, I must also acknowledge Teresa Bernheimer, Khodadad Rezakhani, and Rahim Shayegan for their participation in the original panels in Vienna and Boston. The production of this volume would of course have been impossible without the support of ILEX Foundation and the continuing enthusiasm of Holly Davidson, Niloo Fotouhi, and Greg Nagy for this endeavor. Finally, I am grateful to several individuals

for advice and assistance during the production of this volume, including Mizan advisory board members Kecia Ali, Juan Cole, and Adam Gaiser, as well as Elizabeth Pregill, Hussein Rashid, Stephen Shoemaker, and Michael Toth.

Notes

All digital content cited in this article was last accessed via the URLs provided in the notes below on October 21, 2020.

1. Trans. Charles Greville Torrey in *Classical Arabic Poetry: 162 Poems from Imrulkais to Maʿari* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1985), 242.

2. See the short essay "About Global Late Antiquity" on the main Mizan Project site (https://mizanproject.org/about-global-late-antiquity/).

3. The literature on Riegl, his work, and his cosmopolitan late Habsburg context has blossomed in recent years. See Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013) and the bibliography therein.

4. It should also be emphasized that the concept originated in the discipline of art history. The study of some varieties of late antique material culture (e.g., early Christian art, architecture, epigraphy, and other material remains) is well established, while that of other varieties languishes and remains marginal. The study of material culture and visual evidence is generally poorly integrated with the discourses of historical and textual-philological analysis that dominate in the field of Late Antique Studies.

5. Scholarship that invokes Late Antiquity as the primary framework for historical inquiry often positions Gibbon's work, emblematic of the historiographic paradigm of "decline and fall," as a foil to more progressive and nuanced approaches to the period. Although such a perception is obviously justified to some degree given the title of Gibbon's classic *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, his view of the matter has been overstated; see the Introduction to Garth Fowden's *Before and After Muḥammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). Pirenne's conception of the transformative impact of the rise of Islam on Europe has likewise often been seen as a

narrative of decline, and has likewise occasioned contemporary reevaluation and reflection.

6. On the critical questions provoked by the attempt to incorporate Jewish phenomena into a late antique framework largely shaped by Romanocentric and Christocentric scholarship, see Mira Bamberg, "Late Ancient Judaism: Beyond Border Lines," *Marginalia*, Sept. 17, 2015 (https://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/late-ancient-judaism-beyond-border-lines-by-mira-balberg/).

7. See in particular the emphasis placed on the Sasanians in Peter Brown's germinal *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150–750* (New York: Norton, 1989).

8. Scholars working primarily from the perspective of Western Late Antiquity such as Peter Brown and Garth Fowden have asserted such coevolution, but without much corroboration from the Sasanian sources. Efforts like that of Daryaee here to support such claims from the perspective of specialist scholarship on the Iranian side are rarer and largely recent. For a sustained treatment of parallels in imperial discourse and visual idioms, see Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 45; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

9. Garth Fowden's monograph *From Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993) remains a watershed publication in this regard, as does the celebrated reference work edited by G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar, *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). Among recent reference works, both Eric Orlin et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (New York: Routledge, 2016) and Oliver Nicholson (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) represent attempts to integrate Islamic phenomena into their respective projects as fully as possible. Mention must also be made here of the trilogy of concise works published by Bowersock over

the last several years, which together present a vivid and compelling argument for approaching the emergence of Islam in late antique perspective: see his *Empires in Collision in Late Antiquity* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012); *The Throne of Adulis: Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and *The Crucible of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

10. On the Arab conquest of Iran in late antique and early Islamic perspective, see the long-form essay by Khodadad Rezakhani published here on Mizan in two parts: "The Arab Conquests and Sasanian Iran (Part 1): Some General Observations on the Late Sasanian Period," *Mizan Project*, Feb. 3, 2016 (https://mizanproject.org/the-arab-conquests-and-sasanian-iran-part-1/), and "The Arab Conquests and Sasanian Iran (Part 2): Islam in a Sasanian Context," Mizan Project, Feb. 18, 2016 (https://mizanproject.org/the-arab-conquests-and-sasanian-iran-part-2/).

11. On this problem, see my review essay "Positivism, Revisionism, and Agnosticism in the Study of Late Antiquity and the Qurʾān," *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association* 2 (2018) (forthcoming), which discusses Bowersock's aforementioned *The Crucible of Islam* and a recent volume of essays in Qurʾānic Studies, Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (eds.), *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

12. For example, it is noteworthy that one of the most successful demonstrations of discursive continuities between late antique Christianity and early and classical Islam of the last decade, Thomas Sizgorich's *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), not only neglects Sasanian phenomena but also skirts any discussion of Islamic origins and the Qurʾān.

13. Compare the other recent journal volumes dedicated to the theme of Eastern (or Iranian) Late Antiquity: *Journal of Persianate Studies* 6.1–2 (2013), edited by Parvaneh Pourshariati, and *Iranian Studies* 48.1 (2015), edited by Jason Mokhtarian and David Bennett. Both of these volumes seem to place more emphasis on the pre-Islamic side of the ledger, whereas our approach is perhaps more closely anticipated by the

edited volume by Teresa Bernheimer and Adam Silverstein, *Late Antiquity: Eastern Perspectives* (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2012). That there is significant overlap between the contributors to these three volumes and the present volume is indicative of the still-marginal status of Eastern Late Antiquity as a subject of scholarly inquiry.

14. See Averil Cameron, "Remaking the Past," in Bowersock, Brown, and Grabar (eds.), *Late Antiquity*, 1–20.

The Sasanians and the Late Antique World

Touraj Daryaee

Abstract

This essay discusses the shifts brought on the Iranian Plateau by the founder of the Sasanian Empire, Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān, in the third century CE. I contend that these structural changes in rule, religion, physical boundaries, and political propaganda ushered in a new period in Iranian and Middle Eastern history that coincides with the period of Late Antiquity.

Late Antiquity from the margins

The concept of Late Antiquity, *Spätantike* in German or *Antiqué tardive* in French, emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century within the context of the study of the Mediterranean world. The term became associated with the introduction of Christianity within the Roman Empire, where the religion made its mark on the political structures, mentalities, and worldviews of those who lived and took charge of the Eastern Mediterranean world. This new world in the Mediterranean—markedly different from what may be called the "pagan" Roman period (for lack of a better term)—is recorded in the writings of Constantine's counselor, Eusebius, but also by such events as the proclamation of the Edict of Milan and the removal of the Altar of Victory from the Senate.[1] The influence of Christianity on the ethos and traditions of the Mediterranean world is also visible in the material culture of the

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period, from the fourth century CE onward. Looking at coinage, monuments, and churches, we can unquestionably appreciate the changes that occurred within the Roman Empire, specifically in the East, looking towards the Orient.

The concept of Late Antiquity was made popular in Anglo-Saxon scholarship in the early 1970s through the seminal work of Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*.[2] Brown's book revolutionized the common understanding of Late Antiquity by including Iran in its geography, thus juxtaposing the world of the emperor Justinian at Constantinople with that of the Sasanian King of Kings, Khusrow I Anūšīrwān (531–579 CE), at Ctesiphon. As Humphreys and Clover observe, by the end of the 1980s, the concept of Late Antiquity was "neither medieval, nor Roman," anymore.[3] The relevance of Iran as part of the geography of Late Antiquity has been further emphasized by Michael Morony and Beth DePalma Digeser, who have recognized that Iran fits into the late antique paradigm and should be considered part of a "Global Late Antiquity."[4] More recently, Richard Payne has shown that Christianity was as an integral part of the Sasanian world, just as Manichaeism and Judaism were in the Iranian Empire.[5] I would like to call the study of the Roman and the Sasanian worlds the study of "Late Antique Eurasia," where perhaps the Gupta, but also kingdoms farther afield, could be included. Despite a consensus amongst scholars, some authors still question the utility and accuracy of including the lands east of the Euphrates in the late antique paradigm, as if there was a sign on the other side of the Tigris River saying, "Late Antiquity does not exist here; Christianity never really mattered, nor was it an important part of the Iranian world."[6]

This essay is a response to and reflection upon these questions and debates. Using literary sources and material culture from the Sasanian period, I analyze how and why Iran was transformed in Late Antiquity. I contend that we can detect important changes from the Oxus to the Euphrates (the cultural realm of *Ērānšahr*), between the third and seventh centuries CE. In fact, it appears that the Sasanians actually thought of themselves as living in a new era, different from the past; hence the existence of a distinctly late antique Iran is evident.

The Walled Garden

When we look at literary production from the Sasanian period, we must remain cognizant of the fact that much of the surviving Pahlavi literature was written in the post-Sasanian period. However, many texts were composed in the sixth and the seventh centuries CE and clearly reflect the Sasanian ethos. Perhaps the best case in point is the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* (*Book of Deeds of Ardaxšīr, son of Pābāg*), a reading staple of late antique society in the Persianate world. From its very first chapter, the Book of Deeds mentions that the Iranian world, *Ērānšahr*, had been divided between 240 petty kings (*kadag-xwadāy*) before the rule of Ardaxšīr (224–240 CE), from the time of Alexander to the third century.[7] The aim of the book is to show how Ardaxšīr and his sons (XIV.19), equipped with *xwarrah* (royal glory), were able to unite and rule the Iranian world (*Ērānšahr abāz ō ēw-xwadāyīh tuwānist āwurdan*), and bring about a new age in the history of the region.

Of course, Ardaxšīr's endeavors aimed at bringing back again (*abāz*) what once was in existence, i.e., unity and power in Iran.[8] In reality, Ardaxšīr introduced a change in the status quo of how the Arsacids ruled the Iranian Plateau, moving from a fragmented system (feudal, to use Western terminology) of rule to one in which the King of Kings reigned supreme and could not be challenged by the petty kings as had been done before.[9] The move towards centralization can also be gleaned from the administrative practices of the Sasanian Empire, which grew in scale, especially from the fifth century CE, with mintmarks on coins and administrative seals. The administrative division of the Sasanian Empire can be seen in an Ērānšahr in which governors (*ostāndār*), priests (*mow*), accountants (*āmārgar*), and others were involved in an unprecedented level of control and centralization.[10]

One may contend that the very notion of an *Ērānšahr* was a late antique project of the Sasanians. If we are to follow Gnoli's narrative, there had never been a political understanding of *Ērānšahr* prior to this time.[11] This new political entity called *Ērānšahr* became a physical space in which the inscriptions of the third century, namely that of Šapūr I

and Kerdīr at the *Kaʿbeh-ye Zardosht* ("Cube of Zoroaster"), provide a tangible as well as a mental boundary between the *ēr*, "Iranian," and *an-ēr*, "non-Iranian."[12] Furthermore, walls were constructed to demarcate a real boundary around this empire, namely the Wall of Darband, the Great Wall of Gorgān, and the Wall of the Arabs, while the two rivers, the Oxus and the Euphrates, seem to have been the other demarcation of *Ērānšahr*, which eventually was considered a sacred space.[13]

While Mazdaism or Zoroastrianism already existed under the Arsacids, it was really under Ardaxšīr that Mazdaism began to be officially propagated on the coinage of the Sasanian Empire as a dominant religious tradition.[14] If we take into consideration the coins and the literary corpus, it is no exaggeration to say that the Sasanians wished to project themselves as the promoters of both Zoroastrianism and the start of a new era in Iranian history. This can be seen in late sources such as the *Dēnkard IV* and the *Nāmeh-ye Tansar*.[15] If we believe the *Nāmeh-ye Tansar*, the religious changes introduced by Ardaxšīr made many of his contemporaries uncomfortable, as Mary Boyce suggests.[16] But Ardaxšīr's religious revolution was also praised as a re-organization (*abāz ārāyišnīh*) by those versed in the Zoroastrian religion.[17] Nevertheless, we observe a significant shift in the religious affiliation of the new dynasty on the Iranian Plateau, where Zoroastrian symbols and ideas were overtly pushed to the forefront of society. After all, the first word minted on the Sasanian coins was *mazdēsn* (Avestan, *mazdayasna-*, "Mazda-worshippers"). As far as we know, the Arsacids never made such an effort to promote any single religion, and based on the scant evidence, they were open to other religions.

In literature, the fortified walls built in the sixth century CE around *Ērānšahr* are often connected to the notion of a paradise (Old Persian, **paridayda-*), i.e., a walled garden, in which the king would act as the gardener. While Bruce Lincoln has recently discussed the ideological framework of the term **paridayda-*, I believe there is much that continues in the Sasanian period, where, for example, King Khusrow is clearly described as a gardener and a caretaker of his realm, and *Ērānšahr* is imagined

as a garden with the king as its gardener.[18] In the *Shāhnāmeh* of Ferdowsī, King Khusrow's role is portrayed in the following manner:

> Iran is a lush Spring garden,
> Where roses ever bloom.
> The army and weapons are the garden's walls
> And lances its wall of thorns.
> If the garden's walls are pulled down,
> Then there will be no difference between it and the wilderness (beyond).
> Take care not to destroy its walls
> And not to dishearten or weaken Iranians.
> If you do, then raiding and pillaging will follow,
> And also the battle-cries of riders and the din of war.
> Risk not the safety of the Iranians' wives, children, and lands
> By bad policies and plans.[19]

In these verses, we can appreciate the unfolding of a new Iranian world which did not exist before. In this new world of *Ērānšahr*, justice and civilization rule and the *ēr* (Iranians) are safe under the protection of the king's law or justice (*dād*).

Khusrow I brought order and organization to the Sasanian Empire after revolts, plagues, and famines. As presented in the *Shāh-nāmeh*, the king's justice resonated with those who remembered the Sasanian world. The idea of the circle of justice, a classic concept in the Near Eastern tradition, became synonymous with the Sasanians and reverberated in the Islamicate world.[20] Such conceptions of the world were not present in the Arsacid world; at least, there is simply no record of such ideological views.

In the eyes of the Sasanians, those who dwell outside of the walls are the enemies of justice and order, and are considered monsters. Carlo Cereti's reading of the apocalyptic Middle Persian text, *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*, explains how the two-legged wolves (*gurg ī do zang*) stand for the

"others" or "outsiders" who raid *Ērānšahr*.[21] The text provides an old Iranian trope which goes back to the Avestan tradition of the two-legged wolves as men—and sometimes as monsters—attacking *Ērānšahr*.[22] These "others" bring chaos and destruction to Mazdean order, in a similar fashion as the Evil Spirit (Ahreman) causes cosmic chaos against Ohrmazd (the supreme god, also known as Mazda). Thus, these barbarians/ monsters (*an-ēr*) reside outside the walls, in the desert wild where there is no order or law, while the *ērānagān* (Iranians) stay safe within the walled garden. The more difficult question to answer is what position did the *an-ēr* who lived in *Ērānšahr* occupy? Was there a "civilizing" effect by living in *Ērānšahr*, with the king's justice bringing order to those otherwise considered foreigners?

This dichotomy between the inside and outside of *Ērānšahr* is a late antique phenomenon which did not exist before in either the Achaemenid or the Arsacid kingdoms. This creation of *Ērānšahr* as a paradisiacal space by Khusrow I may go back to the Mazdean tradition associated with the story of the primordial king, Yima/Jamšīd, who rules over paradise in the *Avesta*.[23] Yima/Jamšīd was responsible for building a *vara–* (wall) that protected the best people and species.

State and religion: the numismatic evidence

Another important change within Iranian society characteristic of the late antique period is the role of religion vis-à-vis the state and the specific worldview espoused by the Sasanians. In the Roman Empire, the *chi-rho* banner marked the dominance of Christianity; its manifestation on material culture began with Constantine I's son, Constantius II, in the second half of the fourth century CE.[24]

Within the Iranian world, we observe differences between the iconography used on imperial Arsacid coinage and that on Sasanian coinage. It is well known that Ardaxšīr, who hailed from the province of Persis, imposed new monetary reforms with better regulation of weight and silver content.[25] The obverse of the Arsacid coinage was imitated by the Sasanians (depicting the ruler with distinctive headgear), but they made

sure that the difference and distinctness of their new iconographic features would be visible as well. The legends on the coins were in Middle Persian—a departure from the tradition on the Iranian Plateau, where the Greek or deformed Aramaic used on Arsacid coins.[26] More importantly, on the reverse, an image of the fire altar was struck instead of a depiction of the seated King of Kings.

Coin of the Sasanian Emperor Ardaxšīr I (r. 224–241 CE) with Zoroastrian fire altar on the reverse.

The fire altar had been a well-known symbol used on local coins in Persis before the rise of the Sasanians.[27] On the Iranian Plateau at large, however, the use of this symbol on coinage was new. Beginning with the very first imperial coinage of the founder of the Sasanian Empire, the dynasty struck coins with this image as a marker of a new religious identity. This was the king's fire (*nwry MLKA*), which, according to the *Nāmeh-ye Tansar*, was first associated with the Achaemenid Darius I. The *Nāmeh-ye Tansar* states that since the time of the Achaemenids, the religious (Mazdean) tradition had become obscured and many fire temples had mushroomed without any clear guidelines. Ardaxšīr then extinguished them and carried them to their proper place, probably to his own fire temple, so that there would be only one royal fire.[28] One may suggest that if such an action took place, then from the very first

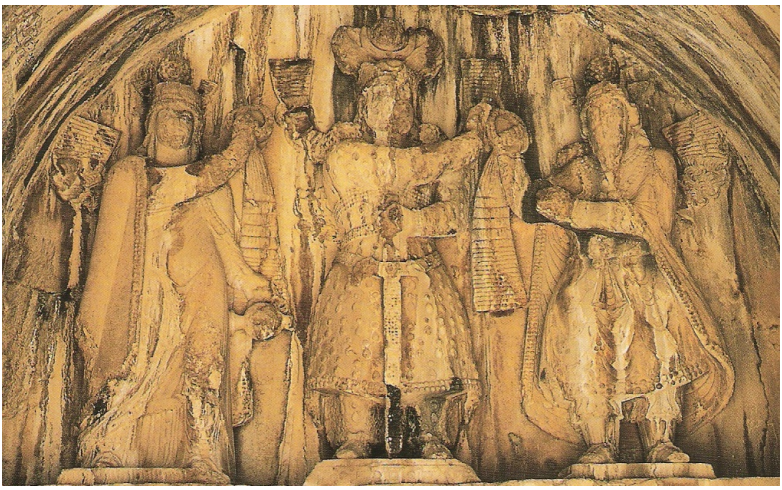
Sasanian King of Kings, there was a campaign to bring religious centralization. On the obverse of Ardaxšīr's coins, the word *mazdēsn* (Mazda-worshipper) was also struck. This is a significant break from Arsacid numismatic iconography and propaganda, suggesting a new ideological and religious identity, where the kings presented themselves as Mazda-worshippers. Later on, in the third century, two figures were added on each side of the royal fire altar, one of them being most likely the King of Kings himself.

The introduction of this new ideology was also echoed in Pahlavi texts, and later in Persian and Arabic literature. The Pahlavi book *Dēnkard* states:

> *hād xwadāyīh dēn ud dēn xwadāyī...*
> *pad awēšān xwadāyīh abar dēn ud dēn*
> *abar xwadāyīh winnārdagīh*
>
> Know that kingship is religion and religion is kingship...
> From them kingship is arranged based on religion and religion
> Based on kingship.[29]

This passage, along with Sasanian coinage, clearly reveals the empire's new conception of "kingship" and "religion" as two interdependent units that cannot survive without each other.[30] This paradigm continued well into the Islamic period and became part of the standard discourse among medieval philosophers and statesmen.[31]

Sasanian rock reliefs also attest to a new era in royal propaganda on a wider scale. While using old themes found in ancient Near Eastern and Achaemenid art, the Sasanians used the subjects of and connections to the past differently.[32] Even though there are signs of continuity, the changes of the Sasanian period are much more visible. Notable examples include the representation of the king, who is now elevated to the status of the gods. This begins with Ardaxšīr in the third century CE and continues into the seventh century with Khusrow II. In these scenes, gods and men are almost indistinguishable and the same size.[33] Unlike in



Relief of Khosrow II flanked by Ohrmazd and Anahita at Tāq-e Bustān, 7th c. CE.

the past, the Sasanian kings and queens resemble the deities Ohrmazd and Anāhīd.[34] The Sasanian rock reliefs in Persis, at Naqsh-e Rustam and Naqsh-e Rajab, depict a variety of scenes such as the king's investiture, courtly scenes, and images of jousting, as well as monumental scenes of victories over the Romans and other assailants. Reliefs represent the aristocracy and the king competing for power, defeating enemies, and receiving diadems from the gods. Many of these images are reused from ancient Near Eastern tradition, especially Achaemenid and Arsacid works, but the Sasanians produced a large number of them throughout the duration of their empire.

A Zoroastrian perspective on history

Another new development introduced during Sasanian times was the concept of history written by the Sasanians.[35] We are mostly dependent on late and post-Sasanian historical writings for Sasanian historical remains. Movses Khorenatsi (*ca.* 410–490s CE) in his *History of the Armenians* states that the Arsacids had a historical tradition, but there is scant

corroborating evidence that suggests the existence of a written Arsacid history.[36] We know, on the other hand, that the Sasanians commissioned a history of *Ērānšahr* from remote antiquity to their own time. The idea of a royal narrative to be passed down as common history shared by all Iranians is a distinctive project of Late Antiquity.[37] This historical narrative, which may have been a genre rather than a single book as in later times, remained a historical blueprint for Iran's ancient history until the nineteenth century.[38] Sources suggest that such a historical work(s) was commissioned in the sixth century during the rule of Khusrow I, and was known as the *Xwadāy-nāmag* (*Book of Lords*).[39] What makes this narrative distinct from former traditions is its strong religious stance, what we may call a Zoroastrian vison of past and present history. I would contend that different genres became sources of history for different classes of people to read in late antique Iran. For example, the *Siyar al-Mulūk* and the *Shāhnāmeh* were kingly texts; the *Bundahišn* was a priestly text, and such texts as the *Garšāsbnāmeh* and *Kūšnāmeh* were popular histories for the masses.[40] This form of historical dissemination embodies the organization of Iranian Late Antiquity, in which religion became the most important element used to view the past and frame the present within the context of sacred narrative texts.

A similar paradigm can also be seen in the late antique Roman world, where from the time of Eusebius, history was remodeled around a biblical framework rather than in the classical style.[41] In the historiography and material culture of the Eastern Roman world, even the Persian generals and the King of Kings, Khusrow II, were presented through a biblical lens, for example as Holofernes, the general of Nebuchadnezzar, or as Goliath. Roman material culture, specifically silver plates from Late Antiquity, present us with evidence for this sacred historical framing of events. The most famous group of silver Roman/Byzantine plates in this historiography of the Perso-Roman warfare are those of battle scenes in which David is able to overcome Goliath. On the back of one of the silver dishes depicting the defeat of Goliath by David, the name of Emperor Heraclius is stamped. This action suggests Heraclius' attempt to portray himself as the victor in the Perso-Roman war (to use James Howard-

Johnston's terminology, "the last great war of Late Antiquity"), but in a biblical context.[42]

Plate with David and Goliath (Constantinople, c. 630 CE). The name of the Roman emperor Heraclius, who styled himself the champion of Christianity against the Persian infidel, is stamped on the back.

In Sasanian *Ērānšahr*, a Zoroastrian vision of historiography in which the burden of the past played its part in the affairs of Late Antiquity also developed. According to that vision, the supporters and enemies of *Ērānšahr* are given an Avestan coloring and context, meaning they are portrayed as the heroes and villains of Zoroastrian sacred tradition.[43] For example, the *Xwadāy-nāmag* depicts the Turks on the Sasanians' eastern front as the Tūranians mentioned in the *Avesta*, with their great king Afrāsīyāb. These associations became an important "historical" tradition that the Turkic tribes and Turkic noble houses such as the

Khwarzmshāhs were only too happy to adopt.[44] In this new historiography, the Romans were tied to the Avestan Salm, who became the enemies of *Ērānšahr* on the western front. Such was the cooptation of sacred (Avestan and biblical) narratives in history in Late Antiquity, for both the Iranians and the Romans.

For the Sasanians, their King of Kings became the inheritor of Iraj, who ruled Iran and the Kayanid dynasty, as indicated in the Avesta and more immediately in the *Xwadāy-nāmag*. The Sasanian kings then played a role in the sacred history of Iran, where, for example, Khusrow II (590–628 CE) took on the role of heroic king Kay Khusrow/Kavi Haosrauua of the *Avesta*. Thus, on his coinage, Khusrow II was made to resemble Khusrow/Kavi Haosrauua, endowed with royal glory (*xwarrah*). To be on par with Kay Khusrow/Kavi Haosrauua, Khusrow II had to emulate his actions and heroics, as is indicated in the *Zamyad Yasht*, an important part of the Avestan hymns to kings and heroes, which lauds the kings of the past by stating that they "all became brave, all courageous... all filled with wondrous power, all perceptive... bold in action."[45] In a sense, the Sasanian kings, such as Khusrow II, had to prove themselves to be courageous, as his namesake predecessor in the *Avesta* had been. This connection explains, perhaps, the slogan struck on the special-issue coinage of Khusrow II (if genuine), stating that *Ērānšahr* is "without fear."[46] Thus, we might suggest that the heroic age of Khusrow II was fully aligned with Zoroastrian historiography and on par with Christian historiography, which, as we have seen, set Heraclius as David in his battles and struggles.[47] This historical framework was not present previously in Iran's history and is a product of the Sasanian Empire. This was a late antique worldview and type of history for the Iranian world, markedly different from the precedents of the past of the Arsacid period.

A millenarian vision

The last point I would like to discuss is the framing of Ardaxšīr's time and the Sasanian Empire according to Zoroastrian millennial expec-

tations. The Zoroastrians constructed a specific form of millenarian vision which began from the "Era of Zoroaster."[48] The world era, divided into 12,000 years, was further divided into 3,000-year cycles. According to that timeframe, 6,000 years elapsed before the first man appeared, and another 3,000 years before Zoroaster's advent.[49] The end of each millennium would bring an important outcome, and so the time of King Ardaxšīr corresponded to one of the major periods of messianic significance among the Zoroastrians.

The account in Masʿūdī's *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa'l-ishrāf* is instrumental for understanding Ardaxšīr's propaganda. In his book, Masʿūdī reports how some believed that Zoroaster had predicted that the Iranians would go through a great change after 300 years, and then again after 700 years. Admittedly, these important events coincided with Alexander's conquest and the end of the Arsacid Empire. It is possible that Ardaxšīr turned the apocalyptic tradition to his advantage, making the establishment of the Sasanian Empire correspond to a new era in the Zoroastrian millennial expectation. The manipulation would have been done expertly, so as to not coincide with an era of "decline," reducing the Arsacid dynasty's rule to 260 years, and shifting Zoroaster's age up to the beginning of his reign.[50] Scholars disagree on whether it was Ardaxšīr in the third century CE or Khusrow I in the sixth century CE who manipulated the calendar.[51] Regardless, the rule of the Sasanians was reckoned as an important time in history. This sort of millennial expectation was not only current among the Zoroastrians, but also within the Jewish community. In Jewish apocalyptic traditions from Late Antiquity, Ardaxšīr is mentioned as an important king that will bring a great change to history, before the appearance of the Messiah.[52] For the Zoroastrians, the savior at that millennium would have been Ušēdar, whom the Manichaeans equated with Mani during the rise of Ardaxšīr in the third century CE; later Mazdak was equated with him as well, during the reign of Kawād I in the sixth century CE.

Conclusion

We could include more examples to demonstrate the ideological and historical shifts inaugurated by the Sasanian Empire. However, I believe the discussion above should suffice to demonstrate that the rule of Ardaxšīr in the third century marked the beginning of a new age on the Iranian Plateau. This change is echoed in the fourth book of the *Dēnkard*, in which it is stated that those versed in religion (*dēn-āgāhān*) had predicted that Ardaxšīr's arrival would cause strife but his reign would be "world-profiting" (*gēhān sūd*).[53] This tradition of changes and shifts are reflected in Pahlavi, Arabic, and Persian sources, supporting the idea that Ardaxšīr brought about fundamental shifts in his own time, which can be called the beginning of late antique Iran.

Indeed, there appears to have been a sharp break from the Arsacid past and a new vision for the people of the Iranian Plateau engineered and crafted by the Sasanian kings. These major changes are not simply reflected in later sources on the third century, but also exist in contemporaneous Armenian and Jewish sources on the third-century transition in the late ancient world. This view of the religious communities living in the late Arsacid-early Sasanian period can be gleaned from the Babylonian Talmud. In one passage in the Talmud, it states that "Antoninus attended on Rabbi [a third-century Palestinian rabbi]; Artabān (the last Arsacid king) attended on Rab [a contemporary Babylonian rabbi]. When Antoninus died, Rabbi exclaimed: 'The bond is snapped!' [So also] when Artabān died, Rab exclaimed: 'The bond is snapped!'"[54] Here we are witnessing a change in relationship between the Jews and the new dynasty, i.e., the Sasanians, which was noticed and characterized as a breakage or 'snapping' of the status quo of life in Eurasia. This change was brought about by Ardaxšīr I and the Sasanian dynasty, and almost every source acknowledged and understood this as the coming of a new age. Ardaxšīr I was a revolutionary whose militant Mazdean zeal and vision of an empire named *Ērānšahr* ushered a new period in Iranian history.

Notes

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37. Daryaee, "Historiography in Late Antique Iran," 65–76.

38. For the most recent discussion of the *Xwadāy-nāmag*, see Robert Hoyland, *The 'History of the Kings of the Persians' in Three Arabic Chronicles: The Transmission of the Iranian Past from Late Antiquity to Early Islam* (Translated Texts for Historians 69; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), 6–23.

39. Shapur Shahbazi, "On the Xwadāy-nāmag," in D. Amin, M. Kasheff, and S. Shahbazi (eds.), "Iranica Varia": Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater (Acta Iranica 30; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 208–229; see also Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Az šāhnāmeh tā khodāynāmeh [From Shahnameh to Khodaynameh: An Inquiry into the Direct and Indirect Sources of the Shahnameh]," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān: The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies* 7 (2007–2008): 3–120. The most recent work on the subject, to which I have not had access, is by Jaako Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag: The Middle Persian Book of Kings* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

40. Following Dumézil's trifunctional system of warrior, priesthood, and commoners that he posited as a fundamental aspect of Proto-Indo-European society, I suggest that genres of literature could also match this trifunctional structure. For the basic outlines of Dumézil's work, see, C. Scott Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil* (rev. ed.; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973).

41. Averil Cameron, "Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium," in Averil Cameron (ed.), *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), 3–35, 4.

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43. Josef Wiesehöfer, *Iraniens, Grecs et Romains* (Studia Iranica 32; Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 2005), 141–142; M. Rahim Shayegan, *Arsacids and Sasanians: Political Ideology in Post-Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2011), 1–4.

44. For the connection of the Khwarzmshāhs to Afrāsīyāb, see Tao Hua, "The Muslim Qarakhanids and their Invented Ethnic Identity," in Étienne de la Vaissière (ed.), *Islamisation de l'Asie Centrale: Processus locaux d'acculturation du VIIe au XIe siècle* (Studia Iranica 39; Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 2008), 339–350.

45. *Zamyad /Kayan Yašt* 19.72. For English translations, see Helmut Humbach, *Zamyād Yasht: Yasht 19 of the Younger Avesta. Text, Translation, Commentary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998); William Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion: Readings from the Avesta and the Achaemenid Inscriptions* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 94.

46. The legend on the gold coins reads: *'yl'n d'pbym kart'/Ērān abēbīm kardār*; see Rika Gyselen, *New Evidence for Sasanian Numismatics: The Collection of Ahmad Saeedi = Contributions á l'histoire et la géographie historique de l'empire Sassanide* (Res Orientales XVI; Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'étude de la civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 2004): 126–127.

47. Cameron, "Images of Authority," 33.

48. See Gherardo Gnoli, *Zoroaster in History* (Biennial Yarshater Lecture Series 2; New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2000).

49. S.H. Taqizadeh, "The 'Era of Zoroaster'," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1947): 33–40, 33.

50. Otakar Klima, "The Date of Zoroaster," *Archiv Orientalni* 27 (1959): 556–564, 560.

51. In favor of Khusrow I, see A. Shapur Shahbazi, "Recent Speculations on the 'Traditional Date of Zoroaster'," *Studia Iranica* 31 (2002): 7–45, 29. For Ardašīr see S.H. Taqizadeh, "Various Eras and Calendars Used in the Countries of Islam (Continued)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 10 (1939): 107–132, 128–129. Taqizadeh had already expressed the opinion that we have some indication of the existence of an "Era of Ardashir" in Syriac and non-official sources; ibid., 131, n. 1. For all of these discussions see, Gherardo Gnoli, *Da Alessandro ad Ardašir: Storiografia e cronologie arabo-persiane* (Rome: ISMEO, 2013), 43–82. It is interesting that in the recent dating of the Bactrian documents, one finds the idea that

the letters could be dated from the beginning of Ardašīr's reign, either 227 CE (see Harry Falk, "The Yuga of Sphujiddvaja and the Era of the Kuṣanas," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 7 [2001]: 126) or, more interestingly, from 224 CE with the kingship of Ardašīr, as in François de Blois, "Du nouveau sur la chronologie Bactrienne post-hellénistique: l'ère de 223–224 ap. J.-C.," *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres Comptes Rendus* 150 (2006): 991–997.

52. Ory Amitay, *From Alexander to Jesus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 115–116.

53. Adhami, "A Question of Legitimacy," 226–227.

54. *Avodah Zarah* 10b–11a. See Richard Kalmin, "Sasanian Persecution of the Jews: A Reconsideration of the Evidence," in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (eds.), *Irano-Judaica VI: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2008): 87–124, 90–91.

East LA: Center and Periphery in the Study of Late Antiquity and the New Irano-Talmudica

Shai Secunda

Abstract

The study of the Sasanian Empire has gradually been incorporated into Late Antique Studies. The inclusion of a territory that was originally marginal to this area of scholarship is by most accounts a positive development, though it is one that should be carefully considered. One means of evaluating the significance of this development is by comparing the scholarly expansion of Late Antique Studies with the field of Rabbinics, in which the position of the Babylonian Talmud vis-à-vis its Sasanian context has recently been reassessed.

Introduction: Expanding LA, expanding Sasanian Studies

This short essay grew out of a conference session that considered new perspectives on late antique Iran and Iraq.[1] My contribution to this topic is entirely theoretical—which is to say I stay my philological hand—as I explore issues of center and periphery relating to geopolitical and religious facts on the ground during Late Antiquity, as well as the disciplinary terrain governing the study of Sasanian Iran. These thoughts are inspired by recent work that redraws the spatial and chronological *limes* of Late Antiquity, thereby bringing other religions and civilizations into the picture, particularly Islam.[2] Here, I think through three over-

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lapping interrelations—namely, Babylonian Jewry and the Sasanians, Babylonian and Palestinian rabbis, and the Sasanian and Roman Empires—and consider lessons learned from evaluating one set of dynamics alongside the others.

The effort to include Sasanian Studies within the purview of Late Antiquity can be compared with the expansion of Sasanian Studies to incorporate non-Iranian communities living in the empire, such as Babylonian Jewry. In both instances, scholarly interest has widened to include societies previously thought irrelevant to their areas of research, yet now recognized as significant factors, despite apparent spatial, chronological, linguistic, religious, and cultural differences. Such a reorientation comes with obvious benefits, and with some less obvious costs.

At its core, the growth of the study of Late Antiquity over the past half-century has itself been powered by a desire to correct a long-standing negative attitude towards this epoch, which had previously been seen as a time of decline and darkness.[3] The establishment of Late Antiquity as an historical period worthy of study was crucial first and foremost for revisiting the history of the West, and particularly for better understanding how the Western world got from the classical age through the Middle Ages, and ultimately to the way we live now. It is just as important to consider the political and intellectual forces now expanding the chronological *limes* of Late Antiquity later, to include, say, early Islam, and its geographical borders eastward, to include Byzantium's ever-present "other"—the Sasanian Empire. What do Late Antique Studies and Sasanian Studies have to gain here, and what do they have to lose?

The benefits for Sasanianists are clear. The study of Late Antiquity is flourishing, so tapping into this enthusiasm requires little justification. On more substantive grounds, there is a strong case to be made that the history of the Sasanian Empire is an integral part of the history of the Roman and Byzantine Empires. After all, the Sasanians saw themselves and their territories as interlinked with the Eastern Mediterranean.

At the same time, applying a late antique periodization initially driven by a particular set of factors to the Sasanian Empire can be dis-

orienting and misleading. Parallels to key features of Late Antiquity in the West—such as Constantine's adoption of Christianity—are either not present at all, or are at least less distinct, in Eastern Late Antiquity. Assuming that the Sasanian entanglement with Zoroastrianism is equivalent to the Christianization of Rome, or stating that Zoroastrianism had become the "state religion" of the Sasanians *a la* Christianity and the Roman Empire, might count as a "cost" of over-reading Sasanian history through the lens of Late Antiquity.[4]

"Late Antiquity," Jewish Studies, and Israeli higher education

The phenomenon of Jewish Studies scholars reframing their work in terms of "Late Antiquity" is likewise worth pondering. For example: for some time, scholars in Jewish Studies have considered discarding the parochial term "the talmudic period" as a designation for the history of the Jews from the third to the seventh centuries CE, in favor of adopting the term "Late Antiquity" instead. Beyond mere semantics, what is lost and gained in this terminological shift?

As an illustration, a recent graduate program in late antiquity at the Hebrew University has struggled to define what "Late Antiquity" should mean in an academic context that, for obvious reasons, is far stronger in talmudic philology than, e.g., the study of Augustine. As with the example of Sasanian Studies, the question is again whether and how to adopt a periodization that was originally about the transition of the Greco-Roman classical world into the Middle Ages—where Jews and their history play, at most, a supporting role—to an academic context in which the story of the Jews is far less marginal. At times, the adoption of the paradigm of Late Antiquity in Jewish Studies and in Israeli higher education has been, more or less, seamless. In other instances, it has led to misrepresentations—in both directions. Thus, "Late Antiquity" has been uncritically presented as a self-evidently relevant periodization for Jewish Studies, while students in Israeli programs in Late Antiquity are perhaps insufficiently immersed in the "classical" sources and paradigms of Late

Antiquity (at least as conventionally defined) to be able to intelligently converse with fellow students of Late Antiquity around the world.

Babylonian Jewry, the Babylonian Talmud, and the Sasanian Empire

Turning to a particular corner of late antique Judaism—the Jews of Sasanian Babylonia—we face similar opportunities and challenges from the expansion of Late Antique Studies to include the Sasanian Empire. The opportunities again include pooling resources from Sasanian and Jewish Studies to produce better understandings of the two entities. Indeed, the study of Babylonian Jewry and their chief cultural artifact—the Babylonian Talmud—has previously been impoverished by a narrow, parochial focus on philology, with little awareness of the context in which the Talmud was compiled. Language instruction in Middle Persian geared towards Talmudists, and collaborations between Talmudists and Iranists, has finally begun to change this picture over the past decade. The burgeoning discipline of "Irano-Talmudica" has been one of the most exciting —if also controversial—developments in Jewish Studies in a long time.[5]

One distinct advantage here, though again one with potential risks, is the possibility of lining up the periodization of the Sasanian era— 224/6 –651 CE—with the "Talmudic Period," beginning in third-century Babylonia with the period of the amoraim (as the rabbis during the third to fifth centuries are known), and concluding with the redaction of the Talmud by unnamed "editors," probably sometime during the sixth century.[6] It may be tempting to view the "Talmudic Period" as largely defined by the dynamics of the Sasanian Empire, and even posit that the production of the Talmud somehow resulted from the Sasanian context.[7] This is an intriguing hypothesis, though one that is difficult to prove, and which will require hard thinking to unfurl its potential implications.

Another problem, which I believe is worth lingering on, is the way in which the expansion of Sasanian Studies to incorporate research into Babylonian Judaism can actually reify the binary distinction between two separate realms—the Sasanian and the Babylonian Jewish—while claiming that one entity is crucial for understanding the other. There is

a tendency to measure how the central—that is, Sasanian—domain may have influenced the particularistic Babylonian Jewish one; specifically, how it left its own, Iranian, sphere and penetrated the Jewish (and thus non-Iranian?) one—and how Babylonian Jewry reacted to Sasanian power or culture.

Sasanianists are normally invested in the history of the Sasanian Empire and its imperial machinery, not in the dense, literally "talmudic" literature of an Aramaic-speaking minority dwelling in Mesopotamia. It is understandable that for the most part, interest in non-Iranian communities living in the empire would mainly involve gauging the reactions of Sasanian subjects to Sasanian actions and policies. From the opposite end, scholars of these non-Iranian communities who are attentive to the Sasanian context are typically looking for instances of direct Sasanian (or Zoroastrian) influence on religious life, or for evidence of Sasanian persecution or support. Trying to simultaneously take into account both vantage points can lead to a more robust account of the Sasanian Empire, or a richer story about a particular Sasanian community.8 Yet in all of this, the underlying distinction between center and periphery remains, and it exacts a price.

Rethinking center and periphery in Rabbinics

In considering this last point, I wish to explore in greater detail Babylonian Jewry and the Babylonian Talmud, which developed and thrived in a Sasanian Mesopotamian context while in contact with Palestinian Jewry and the Palestinian Talmud to the west, more specifically, in the Roman Galilee. This will help us better understand matters of center and periphery in terms of Sasanian Studies and Babylonian Jewry, and regarding Late Antiquity and Sasanian Studies as well.

First, some basic facts: Babylonian Jewry traces its roots to the early sixth century BCE, when the Judeans who were exiled from Judea arrived and settled in Mesopotamia, as described in the late books of the Hebrew Bible and now documented in a newly discovered cache of tablets from a locale in Mesopotamia referred to as "Al-Yahudu"—i.e., "Judea-

town."[9] When the Achaemenids rose to power in the latter half of the sixth century BCE and demolished the Babylonian Empire, some Jews returned to Judea to resettle Jerusalem and rebuild its temple, while many stayed in the Babylonian Diaspora and even migrated further east, into Persia. When this Second Temple was destroyed about a half a millennium later during the Great Revolt against Rome in 70 CE, and when more destruction was wrought in the wake of the Second Jewish War in the 130s, some Jews again left for Babylonia.

By the time the Sasanians rose to power, there was a substantial community of Babylonian rabbis who, along with colleagues in the Galilee, transmitted, discussed, and advanced rabbinic law as it was laid out in the Mishnah—the definitive "halakhic" corpus compiled by the Jewish Patriarch in the Galilee in 200 CE. For the next two centuries, the two major rabbinic centers, in Roman Palestine and Sasanian Babylonia respectively, were closely linked as rabbinic scholars traveled up the Euphrates and down the Mediterranean coast and back, bringing the traditions and discussions of the Mishnah and parallel texts which comprise the material that makes up what is now called the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds.[10]

In many respects, the relationship between the two rabbinic centers could be understood as hierarchically structured along the lines of center and periphery. Thus, the land of Israel was the homeland while Babylonia was diaspora—in fact, the quintessential diaspora. This mytho-geographic distinction runs very deep in Jewish culture, and in scholarship on classical Judaism as well. Further, the relationship between the two talmudic corpora, Palestinian and Babylonian, is also, in a sense, hierarchically ordered with a clear center and periphery. According to this scheme, the Mishnah is the textual core whose structure and content organizes and defines the Babylonian Talmud, and scholars have demonstrated that many of the discussions in the Babylonian Talmud are based on earlier Palestinian discussions of the Mishnah. Reading the Babylonian Talmud against Palestinian parallels—as responsible talmudic philology demands—reinforces the impression that the Babylonian Talmud is an entirely commentarial, second-order form of literature, subordinate to the central

Mishnah and its accompanying Palestinian rabbinic discussion.

When we dig deeper into the relationship between rabbinic Palestine and rabbinic Babylonia, however, we discover that center and periphery can trade places; at times, the distinction is effaced altogether. First, even Galilean rabbis saw themselves as "exiled" in the sense that the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem exiled them from the cultic and spiritual geographic ideal of the Jewish people flourishing in a Jerusalem-centered homeland. Hence, both Galilean and Babylonian Jewry were dwelling in diasporas of a kind. Furthermore, as much as the Babylonian Talmud is a commentary on the Mishnah and is often based on Palestinian rabbinic discourse, it developed into an impressively unequaled—if not entirely *sui generis*—scholastic specimen. In terms of intra-Jewish politics, while Palestinian rabbis continued to assert political and spiritual supremacy over their Babylonian colleagues throughout the second, third, and fourth centuries, Babylonian rabbis became more and more confident of their power and fought back. Let us not forget that it was ultimately the Babylonian Talmud which came to define Jewish law and life from the Middle Ages until today—not the largely neglected Palestinian Talmud.[11]

It is also worth thinking about the role that *geopolitical* center/ periphery dynamics played in Jewish and late antique history. Roman Galilee was, of course, a part of the Roman province Syria Palaestina from after the Second Jewish Revolt until 390, at which point it became Palaestina Secunda until the Arab Conquests. Babylonia, on the other hand, was located in close proximity to the economic and political heart of the Sasanian Empire—indeed, the "talmudic" town of Maḥoza, where the influential fourth-century rabbi, Rava, lived, was part of the Sasanian winter-capital metropolitan area.[12] In this way, Babylonian Jewry flourished at a major center of Sasanian imperial power, while Galilean Jews lived in an area that was, in many respects, marginal to Roman and subsequently, Byzantine, imperial power.

In his *A Traveling Homeland*, Daniel Boyarin has recently argued that studying Babylonian rabbinic culture as merely influenced by, or reacting to, Palestinian rabbinic culture misses how this "doubled" rabbinic text

and rabbinic culture actually functioned.[13] According to Boyarin, reading Babylonian and Palestinian rabbinic Judaism in terms of center and periphery—in either direction—ignores a fundamental feature of rabbinic society, which resists a pat distinction between homeland and diaspora. Even if one's primary research focus is on Babylonian Jewry, understanding this entity we call "Babylonian Jewry" requires paying attention to Palestinian Jewry, which is, of course, an integral part of its imaginary.

Some of the spatial matters affecting scholarship on late antique Babylonian and Palestinian Jewry are relevant for thinking about Sasanian Studies and Sasanian religious communities, as well as the relationship between Sasanian Studies and the study of Late Antiquity. In seeking to pursue a Sasanian research program, we must be fully aware of the dynamics of center/periphery as they play out in terms of contemporary academic politics, as well as in our objects of study. To what extent should we see ourselves as scholars of Late Antiquity, admittedly with a distinctly eastern tilt? How much are the paradigms of the academic "center" relevant for us? Is it necessary for Sasanianists to conceive of the Sasanian Empire as the center while Rome/Byzantium is displaced, or is this thinking already too binary? Likewise, how should scholars of "minority" Sasanian religious communities and literatures, like Jews and the Talmud, or Christians and Eastern Syriac literature, frame their work in relation to the Sasanian court, ethnic Persians, Zoroastrian priests, and Zoroastrian texts? It is exciting and gratifying to follow research that charts new and sophisticated pathways through this complex terrain, including the work of scholars like Maria Macuch,[14] Richard Payne,[15] and Simcha Gross.[16]

A final, concluding thought: Even if it may be best to view these political/religious entities formerly understood as central or peripheral to one another as actually interlocking, most of the shifts described in this paper took place within a broad, but circumscribed, geographical and temporal frame—that of Eastern Late Antiquity, or East LA for short. Whether we are thinking about Babylonian Jewry in relation to the Sasanians, Babylonian Jews vis-à-vis Palestinian Jews, or the Sasanians and their Roman neighbors to the west, Eastern Late Antiquity is the

primary site of these dynamics. As we look ahead, it is this domain which should be the focus of our widened, more contextually sensitive lens.

Notes

1. The session, convened by Michael Pregill, was held at the biannual meeting of the International Society of Iranian Studies and sponsored by ILEX Foundation. Khodadad Rezakhani was the session respondent.

2. For the inclusion of Eastern territories within the late antique paradigm, see the introduction to Teresa Bernheimer and Adam J. Silverstein (eds.), *Late Antiquity: Eastern Perspectives* (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2012), 1–12. For the inclusion of Islam, see Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muḥammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

3.This, at least, is how the project is described in the very first page of Peter Brown's field-establishing *The World of Late Antiquity: From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971): "It is only too easy to write about the Late Antique world as if it were merely a melancholy tale of 'Decline and Fall'... On the other hand, we are increasingly aware of the astounding new beginnings associated with this period: we go to it to discover why Europe became Christian and why the Near East became Muslim." Of course, there are a number of political and rhetorical reasons why Brown would want to frame the historiographical arch in this way. In a corrective spirit, Fowden, *Before and After Muḥammad*, 5–9, has questioned the extent to which Edward Gibbon, who famously authored *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (6 vols.; London: Strahan and Cadell, 1776–1789), held a non-dynamic, lachrymose view of said decline.

4. This is not to deny the significance of the alignment between the Sasanians and Zoroastrianism during this period, or for that matter the parallels between the Roman and Sasanian Empires, regarding which see Touraj Daryaee's contribution to this volume. Rather, it is to acknowledge the many important differences between the Christianization of Rome and the status of Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian Empire, most glaringly, the dramatic reversal of fortunes of Christianity in the Roman Empire from persecuted to state religion, which has no Sasanian parallel.

5. For an introduction to this new undertaking, see Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). Note, however, that the study of the Talmud in its Iranian context has been developing rather quickly, so that my treatment there is already somewhat out of date, particularly due to the further integration of Syriac Studies into the field. See Simcha Gross, "Irano-Talmudica and Beyond: Next Steps in the Contextualization of the Babylonian Talmud," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 106 (2016): 248–255.

6. Debates concerning the "sealing" of the Talmud and the role of anonymous editors have accompanied the academic study of the Talmud for many decades. The most indispensable treatment can still be found in H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991). A sixth-century Sasanian context for the work of the anonymous talmudic editors has recently been advanced by Simcha Gross and other scholars as part of a Hebrew University workshop "A Sasanian Renaissance: Reevaluating the Sixth Century between Empire and Minorities," held June 13–14, 2018.

7. On a related point, I am currently researching how the production and organization of massive texts in the Sasanian Empire, particularly that of the Zoroastrian *dēn* (sacred tradition), may help us understand the emergence of the Babylonian Talmud as the sole, though all-encompassing, compilation produced by Babylonian rabbinic Jewry.

8. For a good example of scholarship in which Sasanianists consult the Talmud in the course of regular research, see Khodadad Rezakhani and Michael G. Morony, "Markets for Land, Labour and Capital in Late Antique Iraq, AD 200–700," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57 (2014): 231–261.

9. See Ran Zadok, *The Earliest Diaspora: Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia* (Tel Aviv: Diaspora Research Institute, 2002). On the significance of the recent finds from Al-Yahudu, which still have not been fully published, see Kathleen Abraham, "The Reconstruction of Jewish Communities in the Persian Empire: The Al-Yahudu Clay Tablets," in David Yeroushalmi (ed.), *Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews* (Los

Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2012), 264–268.

10. For a convenient and brief history of Babylonian Jewry during Late Antiquity, see Isaiah Gafni, "The Political, Social, and Economic History of Babylonian Jewry, c. 224–638 CE," in Steven Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 792–820.

11. For further insight into this process, which occurred during the geonic period, see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

12. On Babylonian Jewish geography, including a lengthy discussion of Maḥoza, see Aharon Oppenheimer, *Babylonia Judaica in the Talmudic Period* (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients B, Geisteswissenschaften 47; Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1983).

13. Daniel Boyarin, *A Traveling Homeland: The Babylonian Talmud as Diaspora* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

14. See for example Maria Macuch, "Jewish Jurisdiction within the Framework of the Sasanian Legal System," in Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (eds.), *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 160; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 147–160.

15. Richard E. Payne, *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 56; Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

16. Simcha Gross, "Empire and Neighbors: Babylonian Jewish Identity in Its Local and Imperial Context" (Ph.D. diss, Yale University, 2017).

Zoroastrian Polemics against Judaism In the *Doubt-Dispelling Exposition*

Jason Mokhtarian

Abstract

This essay focuses on two anti-Jewish chapters from the ninth-century Zoroastrian apologetic-polemical book called the *Doubt-Dispelling Exposition* (*Škand Gumānīg Wizār*). This book represents the earliest sustained engagement of Zoroastrianism with Judaism and Jewish texts. Through a close analysis of the text, this essay demonstrates how the author of this complex work, who synopsizes Genesis 1–3 and some other passages from the Bible and rabbinic literature, focuses his attack on the inconsistencies and internal contradictions in how the "First Scripture" describes God's power over creation, His intentions, and human free will. While this paper focuses on the contents and form of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* itself, it also alludes to the broader historical and intellectual environment in which the author, an educated Zoroastrian layman in search of religious truth, was operating in early Islamic Iran.

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Introduction

Polemical writings represent a subset of texts produced by religious groups in Iran in the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods. Scholars of this time period have demonstrated the high levels of interaction in many aspects of life between the different religious and ethnic communities who resided alongside one another in Mesopotamia ca. 400–1000 CE.[1] By dint of these interactions, the various literary corpora produced by Jews, Christians, Mandaeans, Manichaeans, Zoroastrians, and Muslims contain a rich library of polemics that are deserving of greater scrutiny. Yet across these writings, it is difficult for scholars to use a single definition of polemics that would apply to all of these different texts. At times, it is obvious that a text is polemical to the extent that it explicitly cites and rebuts others' scriptures. At other times, polemical texts implicitly engage theological beliefs or ritual practices that may have impinged upon the authors' own self-definition. The scholarly task of defining polemics is complicated by various factors, especially the fact that many polemical writings from the Sasanian period tend to be evasive in their historical objectivity and rooted in imaginative encounters, even though it is clear that debates and dialogues did happen in numerous social and institutional settings, such as in the Sasanian court. As this essay shows, the rise of Islam marks a significant rupture in the way in which religious communities engaged in polemics against other groups. In part due to the new social order and ruling religion, the early Islamic era (ca. 700–1000 CE) witnessed a flourishing of the genre, including texts by Zoroastrians.

Intended for internal consumption, polemical writings often represent a given community's attempt to define aspects of its identity relative to competing belief systems.[2] A community defends its truth-claims against alternative truths by attacking others' beliefs and scriptures in light of their own internal mythologies, traditions, and language. Although ostensibly directed against others, polemical writings are as much expressions of the authors' self-definition as they are objective analyses of the object of criticism, which gets distorted. To the extent

that polemical writings explicitly address—and even value erudition in—outsider knowledge, they run counter to the predominance of what Albert de Jong, in an important essay on Zoroastrian polemics, astutely calls a "rhetoric of insularity" whereby the religious texts of the Sasanian period describe one's "own community as being self-contained and autonomous."[3] As such, polemical writings in late antique Iran—ranging from those in the Babylonian Talmud to Syriac Christian sources, as well as in Zoroastrian and Arabic texts—offer scholars a solid platform upon which to examine the formation of religious identities.

Each of these literary corpora has an idiosyncratic expression of polemical argumentation against other religions. The contents and targets of polemical texts were in part dictated by the political position of their authors within Iranian society. For instance, imperial polemics by the Sasanian-Zoroastrian elite, such as the inscriptions of Kirder, had a different form and intended function than did those composed by the Jews or Mandaeans, who wielded little authority outside their own communities. The polemics produced by the imperial elite against other religions were often a means to spread propaganda about how political sovereignty was evidence for religious truth. As for minority populations, polemical writings helped to differentiate their communities from those in power over them, as well as from their neighbors who were both similar to and different from them.

Another driving force in the polemics of late antique Iran was one religion's proximity to and entanglements with others, in terms of scriptures, theology, law, and other aspects. This overlap is exemplified by the case of Jews and Christians in Iran. As recent studies demonstrate, Syriac Christian literature's polemics against Jews and Zoroastrians are a result of theological and political controversies, respectively.[4] For their part, the Manichaeans—whose origins were tied up with the Jewish-Christian Elchaisites in Sasanian Mesopotamia—were frequently singled out for criticism because of Mani's universalist, supersessionist claims. Missionizing faiths such as Christianity and Manichaeism are in certain ways more aggressive in pursuing polemical strategies and, due to their successes, were commonly the focus of attacks by others from whom

they were trying to gain followers.[5] And, finally, the Mandaeans—a gnostic, ritualistic religio-ethnic group from southern Mesopotamia—are rarely referred to in Sasanian literature, though they themselves engage in polemics against other groups.[6] Polemics thrived among groups at the bottom of the political and social ladder.

As for the Jews of late antique Iran, the situation is complex. There are two trajectories to consider: polemics against Judaism, and polemics produced by the Jews against others. As a vast compendium of rabbinic law and lore, the Babylonian Talmud contains many passages about (and specific rabbis who engage in) religious disputations with non-Jews.[7] There are also stock phrases employed therein that imply dialogue between Jews and non-Jews (e.g., "should someone tell you").[8] In rabbinic literature, including the midrash, the rabbis often critique others between the lines or with generic names such as "heretics" or "nations of the world." Studies on the talmudic passages about Jesus, as well as other research, further corroborate the existence of Jewish-Christian dialogue and polemic in the Talmud.[9] As Peter Schäfer argues in a book on the Jesus passages, such texts "are polemical counternarratives that parody New Testament stories, most notably the story of Jesus' birth and death." The rabbis "ridicule," "contest fervently," "counter" and "reverse" aspects of Jesus's life-story, from the Virgin Birth to the Resurrection.[10]

More recently, Yaakov Elman has gone beyond the Jewish-Christian paradigm to suggest that the Talmud also contains polemics against Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism.[11] Thus, scattered throughout the Babylonian Talmud are traces of hostility towards ideas and figures from outside religions.[12] Still, to the best of my knowledge, the Talmud does not openly cite sentence-length or longer excerpts of the Christian New Testament or Manichaean and Zoroastrian writings in order to show their internal contradictions. Such rationalist critique of other religions emerges among Jews only after the rise of Islam. In Sasanian times, the Babylonian rabbis were in fact just as concerned with declaring their supremacy over their Palestinian brethren as they were over outsiders (perhaps even more so).[13] Such inner-Jewish polemics continued centuries later in the form of Rabbanite-Karaite debates.[14] Indeed, it is clear

that in the history of polemics in Iran, the emergence of Islam marked a rupture for some groups, especially Jews and Zoroastrians, from latent forms of critique to more explicit and open engagement with outsider writings and ideas.

In my view, talmudic polemical passages do not reflect an attempt on the part of the Babylonian rabbis to polemicize against other religions in an open and systematic way. By contrast, Christians, Zoroastrians, and early Muslims do not hide their critiques of Judaism (or Jews or the Bible) in Syriac, Pahlavi, and Arabic writings from the late Sasanian-early Islamic period.[15] For the rest of this essay, I would like to focus on a Zoroastrian polemical work against Judaism and other religions dated to the tenth century CE called the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*.

The Škand Gumānīg Wizār *and the Iranian sectarian milieu*

The *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*—the title of which is often rendered in English as the *Doubt-Dispelling Exposition*—is both a Zoroastrian apology and a polemic against Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and other sectarian groups. This lengthy text, which is also apologetic in nature, offers a unique glimpse into the Zoroastrian perspective on the history of religious interactions in Iran.

The *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is part of the Pahlavi corpus produced by Zoroastrians residing in the Islamicate world in the ninth and tenth centuries CE, though some of its contents may reflect late Sasanian thought. The author of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* had access to parts of the *Dēnkard*, a nine-volume compendium of Zoroastrian thought, the third book of which also contains polemics.[16] The original Middle Persian version of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is no longer extant; the extant version is composed in a later form of transcription called Pāzand, a system of writing Middle Persian in the Avestan alphabet, with some exegetical influences mixed in.[17] The Indian copyist and scholar Neryosang Dhaval, working perhaps in the eleventh or twelfth century, is probably responsible for both the Pāzand and the Sanskrit recensions of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*.[18] Despite its late date of composition in the ninth or tenth

century, the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is, for all intents and purposes, the earliest fully developed Zoroastrian engagement with Judaism, though there are other references to Jews and Judaism in earlier and contemporaneous sources.[19] The relevance of this source for scholars of Sasanian and early Islamic Iran cannot be overestimated, since it dates to the early Islamic period, that it to say, within a new sociohistorical paradigm in which explicit polemical exchanges thrived, in contrast to the more subtle expressions of religious disagreement found in the Sasanian period.

An updated critical edition of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is a desideratum. The standard version that exists today is Jean-Pierre de Menasce's French translation from 1945, while new critical editions of parts of the text are provided in two dissertations as well: Dieter Taillieu's 2004 dissertation provides critical editions of the anti-Manichaean chapters, while Samuel Thrope's from 2012 does so for the anti-Jewish chapters.[20] Excerpts of other parts of the book have been published elsewhere. The *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is a masterpiece of apologetic-polemical literature, and hence deserves more attention by academics interested in the religions of Iran of the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods.[21] In this paper, I make an introductory effort at advancing our understanding of the anti-Jewish chapters.

The author of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* was a man named Mardānfarrox ī Ohrmazddādān whose stated intention was to compose a philosophical work of religious self-exploration that could be used as a manual for Zoroastrians who encountered other beliefs about God. The work contains sixteen chapters total. Chapters two through four are the author's responses to questions by a man named Mihrāyar ī Mahmadān from the city of Isfahan, who (at least judging by his name) appears to have been either Muslim or at least the son of a Muslim.[22] This question-and-answer form is common in the Pahlavi tradition. It is the last six chapters of the book that contain polemics against the other faiths: against Islam, and more specifically against the Mutazilites and Asharites (chs. 11–12); against a Judaism that has been influenced by Islam in various complex ways that remain to be fleshed out (chs. 13–14); against Christian doctrines such as the Virgin Birth and the Trinity (ch. 15); and,

finally, against Manichaeism (ch. 16).[23]

Mardānfarrox's book is a response to the sectarian milieu of Iran in the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods, and hence it contains additional information about religious sects. For example, in chapter 6.1–8, the author warns against a group called the daharī, from the word for "time," which designates materialists or some form of belief in which it is held that there is no beginning or end of time. An excerpt of this passage reads as follows:

> Another deception is that of the atheists, who are called *daharī*, and consider themselves to be delivered from religious discipline and the toil of performing meritorious deeds. They foolishly utter much nonsense. Notice this: This world with all its manifold transformations and organizations of its constituents and organs, its oppositions and combinations, is considered to have for its principle the Infinite Time, and that there is no reward for merits and no retribution for sins, no paradise or hell, no agent to direct good or evil deeds, and that all things are material and the spiritual world does not exist.[24]

This passage criticizes as "utter nonsense" the view of these atheists called *daharī*. According to Mansour Shaki, Mardānfarrox argued against these atheists "in complete accord with the accounts of the Islamic heresiographers and theologians of the time."[25] In attacking this sect, Mardānfarrox is also in harmony with the *Dēnkard* Book III, which defines this same sect as devil-lovers:

> He who does not believe in the existence of the creator Ohrmazd, [who denies] the Religion and the Prophet and supports the doctrine of the devils, is in religious terminology called "adorer of the devil," heretic, and non-Iranian and, in the popular parlance, sophist, as well as *daharīg*.[26]

The *Dēnkard* defines these atheists as heretics and non-Iranians.

As other scholars have pointed out, Mardānfarrox was familiar with and working from within the same cultural context as the *Dēnkard* and the *Zādspram*, the latter being a ninth-century work compiling traditions of Zoroastrian cosmogony, theology, legend, medicine, and other types of material.[27] Mardānfarrox praises the *Dēnkard* as a work from which he drew:

> From the very power of the knowledge of the religion and from the conscientious writing of the bright Ādur-pādyāwand, and from the writing written by the blessed Rōšan son of Ādurfarrbay, which is named *Writing of Rōšan* (*Rōšan nibēg*) and that also of the great, bright and righteous Ādurfarrbay son of Farroxzād, leader of those of the Good Religion. The writing, which explains the Religion and is named *Dēnkard*, has saved me from many doubts, errors, and deceit and from the evil of the sectaries.[28]

This passage references certain Zoroastrian authorities, such as the first compiler of the *Dēnkard* (Ādurfarrbay ī Farroxzadān), and perhaps his mentor Ādurbād ī Yāwandād, and finally Rōšn, son of Ādurfarrbay.[29]

Mardānfarrox includes several autobiographical passages in the book. One alludes to the fact that the author's desire for truth and personal doubts about his Zoroastrian faith led him to travel around Iran and the Indian subcontinent to inquire about other sects. Carlo Cereti interprets this as a literary topos, with a parallel in the *Mēnōg ī Xrad* (1.35–39), a Pahlavi question-and-answer book that contains advice for how to live a proper life.[30] While Mardānfarrox did not travel far and wide, he was undoubtedly someone who came into contact with non-Zoroastrians in his pursuit of religious knowledge. Here is one autobiographical excerpt from chapter 1.35–38:

> (As to) me, I am Mardānfarrox son of Ohrmazddād. I have written this composition because in (our) times I have seen sec-

> taries of many kinds, of many religions and of many different practices. And from childhood on I have always sought and investigated the truth with a fervent mind. For this very reason I have gone to many countries, up to the shore of the sea. And this summarised discourses which derive from it (contain) the questions of those who seek after the truth, gathered and selected from the writings and the memoirs of the antique sages and the good Dasturs, among whom the most famous was the blessed Ādur-pādyāwand. These were gathered in the memoirs that go under the name of *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*. Because it is very necessary for the explanation of the doubts of new disciples about the knowledge of truth, of the trustworthiness and the truth of the Good Religion and about the misery of the adversaries. And I have made and arranged this not for the wise and skilled (*abzārōmandān*), but for the students and the unskilled (*nō-abzārān*). So that many may be without doubt about the prosperity and trustworthiness of the discourses of the Good Religion of the Ancient Teachers.[31]

The author, in his quest for truth, describes the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* as a collection of memoirs. He states that the purpose of the work is to dispel doubts among Zoroastrian disciples, especially for "the students and the unskilled." The author appears to have thought of this as a Zoroastrian commandment ("one is commanded to examine [the contradiction and error of the scripture]").[32] With respect to Mardānfarrox's social status, Thrope has concluded: "It seems that Mardānfarrox himself was a layman, rather than a priest; this fact alone makes the [*Škand Gumānīg Wizār*] unique among Zoroastrian literature."[33] Perhaps the author's status as a layman was the reason that he was able to pursue religious studies in the first place, thereby gaining detailed knowledge of the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, Hebrew Bible, rabbinic literature, New Testament, and Manichaean writings.[34]

The author saw Manichaeism as one of the main rivals to orthodox Zoroastrianism. Mardānfarrox was familiar with Manichaean terms and

theodicy, often disparaging Mani himself:

> And in particular from that of the deceiver, the great *Mazandar* (demon), the evil teacher, the leader of the drunken, Mānī, whose faith is sorcery and deceit of the religion and evil teaching, and whose manner is to go under cover. Now I am wisely professing (the Good Religion) by the power of wisdom and the strength of the knowledge of the religion.[35]

Mani is here described as someone who deceives and goes "under cover" in order to spread its evil teachings. This is the type of threat that the author targets.

At its core, the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is a rationalist critique of religious doctrines focusing on the internal contradictions of scriptures about God's power and good and evil and was influenced by Islamic rationalist theology (*kalām*).[36] In its adaptation of the approach to such questions in *kalām*, rationalistic thinking was turned outward to find problems in others' writings, and turned inward to defend against the potential critique by others against Zoroastrian thought. For example, chapter two of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* articulates how to fend off questions from outsiders about the apparent contradictions or inconsistencies in Zoroastrian cosmogony that, as Thrope explains, "seem to violate the absolute division between the good creator god Ohrmazd and the primordial evil antagonist Ahriman."[37]

With respect to Mardānfarrox's exposition against the monotheistic religions, scholars have drawn comparisons between the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*'s methods and Marcion's criticisms of the Old Testament, as well as the thought of Ḥīwī al-Balkhī, a ninth-century Jewish rationalist-Marcionite.[38] Ḥīwī al-Balkhī was a biblical critic from Balkh, in Khurasan, who wrote "a polemical work in rhyme against the Bible, containing two hundred questions and difficulties."[39] This book is unfortunately no longer extant, but the author's ideas were widely rejected by both the Karaites and the Geonim, including Saadya Gaon, who wrote a lengthy response

to Ḥīwī al-Balkhī's ideas about God's role in the Adam and Eve story, why men suffer and die, and God's attributes.[40] Rosenthal has argued that Ḥīwī al-Balkhī may have borrowed from the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*, an argument that Thrope has since questioned.[41] However, at the very least, these two works share a set of similar concerns that were in circulation in the ninth and tenth centuries.

The Škand Gumānīg Wizār*'s chapters against Judaism*

Perhaps the most studied chapters in the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* are chapters 13 and 14, its critique of Judaism, to which I now turn.[42] As mentioned earlier, these chapters have been transcribed and translated by Thrope in a recent dissertation. In terms of structure, chapter 13 is essentially divided up into two parts: first, a series of pseudo-citations of Genesis 1–3, and second, the author's refutations of those pseudo-citations using rationalist thought. The chapter begins with the following statement:

> Concerning the contradictions and vile utterances of the First Scripture [*naxustīn niβā*] which they call 'noble' [*āžāṯ*][43] and they are unanimous in their opinion that God wrote it by his own hand and gave it to Moses.[44]

The chapter begins with a description of its main aim—namely, to highlight the internal contradictions and evil ideas found in "the First Scripture." The term *naxustīn niβā* is difficult to identify. The word *niβā* can mean "writing," "scripture," or "book."45 It is hard to know whether the use of this term implies that the author is deriving his analysis from a written version of the text. If so, is this phrase ("first writing/scripture") a reference to the entire Torah? Or perhaps just to Genesis?[46] Or maybe, given the strong Islamic coloring of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*'s understanding of Judaism, it could be an allusion to the Old Testament being the first of the three monotheistic scriptures? The text's description of God writing the First Scripture by hand and giving it to Moses is an appar-

ent allusion to the revelation of the Ten Commandments as told in the Exodus narrative. By comparison, *Dēnkard* Book III, chapters 227 and 288 both refer to the Torah, which they call "the fundamental book" (*bun nibēg/nibēg bun*), and say it was given by the Zoroastrian evil serpent Dahāg to Abraham who then passed it on to Moses.[47] The introductory passage from the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* cited above never mentions Abraham, though the patriarch plays a prominent role in other passages.

Based on the fact that Mardānfarrox draws from a fluid array of possible written and oral sources, this term "First Scripture" probably does not refer to any single corpus such as the Torah. It could be symbolic, similar to how one might say "Bible" to refer to any number of different texts. It behooves scholars to move away from the idea that Mardānfarrox's critique of Judaism stems from knowledge of Jewish texts extant in the Bible, rabbinic literature, targums, Enochic corpus, or transmitted via the medium of other written works.[48] It may be that Mardānfarrox was exposed to such works in the course of his education, but, in my view, the two chapters against Judaism are not based in the author's direct citation from them. To me, it seems possible that Mardānfarrox is summarizing what he learned based on memory so that when his readers encounter these texts they will know what to say.

The Škand's *critique of Judaism, I: Cosmogony*

After the introduction, chapter 13 offers Mardānfarrox's summary of the contents of Genesis 1–3. Lines 5 through 14 begin with the introductory formula "It says at the beginning of the book," followed by partial citations or paraphrases of Genesis 1:2–4 (when God creates light) and Genesis 2:2–3 (when God rests on the seventh day). The text conspicuously does not mention God's creation of the heaven and earth in Genesis 1:1, though it conflates verses 2–4 before then jumping ahead to Genesis 2:2–3, which the author merely summarizes. In line 14, the author then interjects that God resting on the seventh day is the basis of the Jews in his time observing the Sabbath [*šuṇbaṯ*].

The next unit (lines 15–45), set off by the phrase "this as well," discusses parts of the Adam and Eve story that are found in Genesis 2:7, 2:21–23, 3:1–15, and 3:22–24. This section is a free-floating summary of the story of Adam, Eve, and the serpent. There are some discrepancies in the way the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* describes the event, especially in line 31 where it says "Ādīnō became angry" after Adam confessed to God that he knew was naked.[49] The *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* often emphasizes the Jewish God's anger (see esp. chapter 14). Also, in this unit, the description of God's expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden is abbreviated and not totally accurate.

After this, the text moves on (marked by "they also say this") to summarize Genesis 1:26–30. A comparison of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*'s paraphrase and the Hebrew text demonstrates the loose nature of the former text's pseudo-citations of the latter. I have italicized the parts of the biblical text that make up the building blocks of the Persian text:

Škand Gumānīg Wizār 13.46–47:

> They also say this: "He made and created this material world [*gāθī*] with everything in it for human beings and he made human beings kings over all creation, the wet and the dry."[50]

Genesis 1:26–30:

> And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall *rule* the fish of *the sea*, the birds of the sky, the cattle, *the whole earth*, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and *rule* the fish of *the sea*, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep *on earth*." God said, "See, *I give you every* seed-bearing plant *that is upon all the earth*,

> and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals *on land*, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so.[51]

This portion of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is a synopsis of Genesis. Mardānfarrox may not have known more than he says here, or he may just be giving an outline for his readers to the biblical narrative such that if and when they encounter Jews who propound doctrines based on Genesis they have a rebuttal ready.

Interestingly, Mardānfarrox's switch from pseudo-citation to critique (lines 48–58) focuses on the same verses and terms that were used in lines 5–47. In other words, the relationship between parts 1 and 2 is well organized. The author did not attach the appropriate critiques to the biblical verses, but rather suspends them until after the pseudo-citations.

In delving into Genesis 1's description of God as the creator of light, the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* jumps immediately into the argument that God is not light:

> Where and in what limits were the desolate earth and darkness and God and his spirit and the black water? Or, rather, of what nature was God himself? It is evident that he was not light for when he saw the light it was because he had not seen it before that it seemed good to him.[52]

This passage raises several questions: first, what were the limits of the earth, darkness, and water? And second, what does this passage imply about God's nature? From here, the author offers three rebuttals to the creation narrative:

> (A) If they say God is light, you say: God cannot be light. Why? Because the reason that He called it "good" is because He had

never seen it before. Also, He would not have been surprised.

(B) If they say God is darkness, you say: God cannot be darkness. Why? Because darkness would then be the origin of light.

(C) If they say God is neither light nor dark, then they must demonstrate a third type of being that is neither light nor dark.

Time and again, Mardānfarrox's critique of Judaism focuses on the internal contradictions of scripture, especially in how it describes God's power and knowledge. The *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* goes on to argue that "if light exists, then it is not a creation of Ādīnō."[53] The author arrives at this conclusion based on various rational objections to the way the Bible describes God's role in creation. For instance, God's command to create light had to have been received by an entity in order to be enacted: "For this is certain that it is possible to give a command [only] to one who is commanded."[54] Does this mean that there existed already a light before God created light? Or if there was nothing before light, then how could nothing have heard Ādīnō's command to create light? The author continually uses basic principles of logic—e.g., the premise that something must exist as a recipient of God's command in order for the command to be followed, or that thought precedes speech—in order to critique the biblical description. Another example of this is Mardānfarrox's questioning of why God, if all He needed to do in order to create the elements of universe was to say the word "Be!", would have needed six whole days to create the world, and how God could even count days before He created the sun (see lines 92–105).

The Škand's *critique of Judaism, II: The Fall*

In the next unit of chapter 13, the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* engages the problem of God's will versus human freedom in the story of Adam and Eve. In lines 106–120, the author examines the problem of whether God wanted Adam and Eve to sin or to follow His command not to eat from

the Tree of Knowledge. Did God intend for Adam and Eve to sin? Either answer—yes or no—proves that there are flaws in God's character. First off, Mardānfarrox asks, if God knew that Adam and Eve would violate His will, then why is God described as getting angry? Thus, Mardānfarrox here calls God's anger "unreasonable."[55] As I mentioned earlier, this characterization of God as angry is not as prominent in the Old Testament itself as Mardānfarrox makes it out to be. According to the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*, this proves that Ādīnō "himself did not fully realize the desire of His will and it reveals Him to be His own opponent and adversary."[56] In other words, God does not have control over creation and works against Himself without realizing it.

On the other hand, what if God did not intend for Adam and Eve to sin? In other words, what if Adam and Eve had free will? If this is true, Mardānfarrox writes, then this merely demonstrates that God is not all-knowing and all-powerful, but rather that He is "ignorant and unrecognizing."[57] It also suggests that humans were stronger than God.

In lines 121–131, the polemic subsequently argues that the implication of God having to call out to Adam to find out where Adam is ("Then Ādīnō came into the garden, called Ādam by his name saying, 'Where are you?'"[58]), and then having to ask him whether he ate from the tree ("'You have not eaten from the Tree of Knowledge which I said you were not to eat from, have you?'"[59]) is that God is not omniscient.

The Škand's *critique of Judaism III: The divine nature*

As the previous examples show, throughout the chapter, the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* concentrates upon three aspects of God: His will, knowledge, and command. In one of the last lines in chapter 13, the author gives what I take to be the thesis of the entire chapter: "Now it is evident that all three are opposed to each other: will, knowledge, and command."[60] The main threads of attack against the Jewish God are against His omnipotence, omniscience, and goodness of intentions. These attacks are, in fact, very similar to Mardānfarrox's critiques of Christianity and Islam, as recently elucidated by Shaul Shaked and Yuhan Vevaina.[61]

Shaked explains that Mardānfarrox's "arguments against Islam concentrate on the contradiction of faith in an omnipotent deity who permits evil to exist in the world: this means, according to the author, either that He is not all-powerful, or not good, or lacking in wisdom, or lacking in forgiveness."[62] In the view of the author, the critique of the Jewish God is one part of a critique against the monotheistic deity more generally.

Chapter 14 contains similar attacks against a series of pseudo-citations in a more rapid and expansive fashion. It concentrates on aspects of God's personality that are superficially negative. For instance, the chapter opens up by pointing to a self-proclamation of God as a vengeful deity:

> I am Adonay, vengeance-seeking and vengeance-repaying and I pay the vengeance of seven generations through the children, and I never forget (this) vengeance.[63]

As Dan Shapira has shown, the first phrase in this passage ("vengeance-seeking and vengeance-repaying") accurately "reflects the Massoretic text."[64] Drawing from later Judeo-Persian translations of the Torah, Shapira argues that this passage "affirms a continuation from the Jewish Bible translations through Middle Persian and to New Persian." Again, one has to consider whether these accurate renderings imply a textual basis for the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*'s quotations. While there may indeed be some aspects of and correspondences in terms in the pseudo-citations that one can trace to various other sources, I would again emphasize that there are also differences between the above-cited verse and these other sources. The subsequent citations of the biblical text are not verbatim citations from known Jewish sources.

The critiques in this chapter, which emphasize God's anger and violent tendencies, lead to several conclusions about God's will, knowledge, and command. For example, chapter 14 points out passages, such as Genesis 6:6, in which God expresses regret that He created humankind ("His final work is entirely regret").[65] Towards the end of the chapter,

the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* sums up its criticisms of the biblical God after telling a tale, also found in the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Taʿanit* 24b–25a),[66] about how an angel reports to poor people that God cannot change their fate:

> From these words it is apparent that He himself is not the dispenser of lots and destiny, their allotment is not according to His will, and He cannot change fate. The revolution of the sphere, the sun, moon, and stars are not in the compass of His knowledge, will, and command... This catalogue of their many erroneous sayings that I wrote seems long. Whoever considers and contests these sayings should for his sake consult [about] the *āzād* (noble [?]) with a *dastur*, so that he will become aware of the nature of that same scripture and the truth of that which I said. Now if these are the signs and tokens of that God, then truth is far from Him, mercy is unknown to Him, He has no part of wisdom, and therefore He himself is the *druž* (lie), the lord of Hell, of gloomy darkness, of the dark race whom those perverted by demonic evil praise and worship by the name Ādīnō. This chapter is here completed.[67]

This conclusion to the polemical chapters against Judaism assails the biblical God for having virtually no control over the fate of human beings or the movement of the cosmos which He himself created. Mardānfarrox advises his readers to consult with a Zoroastrian priest (*dastur*) to help work through the criticisms. The final line of the chapter leaves no room for confusion: the biblical God—lacking in mercy and wisdom—is a demon who spawned the "dark race" of the Jews who worship Him.

Conclusion

Although Zoroastrian polemics against Judaism likely predate the rise of Islam, it was not until the ninth century that this mode of engagement with Judaism and the other religions of late antique Iran became a

formalized literary genre. In part, this change was a result of the loss of imperial authority among Zoroastrians, some of whom by the ninth century felt that it was necessary to rebut the claims of other faiths, especially Islam. This was part of a wider trend in the early Islamic period (ca. 700–1000 CE), a time of radical change in the way in which religious groups engaged with the doctrines of others.

As illustrated in the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*, Zoroastrian polemics against Judaism and Jews in the ninth century were focused on the internal inconsistencies in how sacred texts described God's character and omnipotence. Although preserving earlier traditions, the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is a rationalist critique of theological principles written in the same mode as found in contemporary intellectual currents, particularly *kalām*. For this reason, scholars of Islamic thought are well-positioned to contextualize its method of critique. The author of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*, Mardānfarrox, was an educated layman in quest of religious truth. He presumably pursued religious studies alongside members of other faiths as, ultimately, a means to defend Zoroastrianism. Self-definition was thus as much of an exercise in proving why others' beliefs were wrong as it was in proving why one's own beliefs were right through, for instance, exegesis of one's own scriptures. Mardānfarrox was clearly affected by the highly sectarian environment of his time, in which debate and critique, especially between dualists and monotheists, were rampant regarding questions such as the role of human free will or the power and nature of God. The *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is one of the richest sources of information for historians who are interested in such debates in this period.

Indeed, the most fruitful approach to the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* would be to compare it to the plethora of other polemical writings produced by non-Zoroastrians from this time period. For instance, the flourishing of Islamic polemics in the ninth century is attested in the anti-Christian writings of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, a ninth-century Muslim with Shi'i and Manichaean tendencies who criticizes the idea of the Trinity.[68] These and other polemics from the ninth century lay a foundation for later authors, such as the Iranian Mu'tazilite ʿAbd al-Jabbār

(d. 415/1025) and, even later, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350), who criticize Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism.[69] Moreover, the study of these Arabic writers would be greatly enhanced by additional research into the polemics found in other corpora, including in Christian Syriac, Geonic, Karaite, and even Judeo-Persian texts.[70] It is only once each of these writings is studied on its own terms that historians can perhaps try to reconstruct broader trends in the evolution of polemical culture in Iran throughout late antiquity. In sum, while the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* is deserving of further study by experts in Zoroastrianism, its appeal as a gem of Middle Eastern literature extends to scholars who research religious debate and identity formation in Iran *ca.* 600–1000 CE.

Notes

All digital content cited in this article was last accessed via the URLs provided in the notes below on January 5, 2021.

1. For an overview of these communities, see Michael Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

2. See Albert de Jong, "Zoroastrian Self-Definition in Contact with Other Faiths," in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (eds.), *Irano-Judaica V: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2003), 16–26, esp. 17.

3. See idem, "Zoroastrian Religious Polemics and Their Contexts: Interconfessional Relations in the Sasanian Empire," in Arie van der Kooij and Theo L. Hettema (eds.), *Religious Polemics in Context: Papers Presented to the Second International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR) Held at Leiden, 27–28 April 2000* (Studies in Theology and Religion 11; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004), 48–63, esp. 58.

4. See the recent collection of essays in Flavia Ruani (ed.), *Les controverses religieuses en syriaque* (Études Syriaques 13; Paris: Geuthner, 2016).

5. On anti-Manichaeism, see Sarah Stroumsa and Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics in Late Antiquity and under Early Islam," *Harvard Theological Review* 81 (1988): 37–58.

6. See de Jong, "Zoroastrian Religious Polemics," 51–52: "the Mandaeans are (virtually) *never* mentioned in non-Mandaean literature." For an example of Mandaic polemics, see Dan D.Y. Shapira, "Manichaeans (Marmanaiia), Zoroastrians (Iazuqaiia), Jews, Christians and Other Heretics: A Study in the Redaction of Mandaic Texts," *Le Muséon* 117 (2004): 243–280.

7. On this sub-genre of texts, see Jenny R. Labendz, *Socratic Torah: Non-Jews in Rabbinic Intellectual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

8. See Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity*, trans. Batya Stein (Albany, NY: State Univer-

sity of New York Press, 1996), 128.

9. By way of example, see Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Naomi Koltun-Fromm, "A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 (1996): 45–63; Eliyahu Lizorkin, *Aphrahat's Demonstrations: A Conversation with the Jews of Mesopotamia* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 642; Leuven: Peeters, 2012); Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

10. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 9.

11. See Yaakov Elman, "Some Aspects of Interreligious Polemic in the Babylonian Talmud," in Isaac Kalimi (ed.), *Bridging between Sister Religions: Studies of Jewish and Christian Scriptures offered in Honor of Prof. John T. Townsend* (Brill Reference Library of Judaism 51; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 175–194. For an earlier study on Jewish-Zoroastrian polemics, see Eli Ahdut, "Jewish-Zoroastrian Polemics in the Babylonian Talmud," in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (eds.), *Irano-Judaica IV: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1999), 17–40 [Heb.].

12. By way of example, see *b. Sanh.* 46b where, in search of a biblical prooftext for the requirement to bury corpses, the rabbis enter into dialogue with King Shapur II, a monarch who adhered to the Zoroastrian religion which prohibits such burials.

13. See Daniel Sperber, "On the Unfortunate Adventures of Rav Kahana: A Passage of Saboraic Polemic from Sasanian Persia," in Shaul Shaked (ed.), *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982), 83–100; Richard Kalmin, "Genealogy and Polemics in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 67 (1996): 77–94.

14. See Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 94–99; Haggai Ben Shammai, "Major Trends in Karaite Philosophy and Polemics in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in Meira Polliack (ed.), *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources* (Handbook of Oriental

Studies, Section 1: The Near and Middle East 73; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 339–362.

15. For example, see Adam H. Becker, "L'antijudaïsme syriaque: entre polemique et critique interne," in Ruani (ed.), *Les controverses religieuses en syriaque*, 181–208; Shaul Shaked, "Zoroastrian Polemics against Jews in the Sasanian and Early Islamic Period," in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (eds.), *Irano-Judaica II: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1990), 85–104; and Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

16. On polemics against Jews in *Dēnkard* Book III, see Jean de Menasce, "Jews and Judaism in the Third Book of the Dēnkart," in *K.R. Cama Oriental Institute: Golden Jubilee Volume* (Bombay: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1969), 45–48; Shaked, "Zoroastrian Polemics."

17. On Pāzand, see Samra Azarnouche, "Deux modes de transmission dans la tradition scripturaire zoroastrienne: Interdépendance du Pehlevi et du Pāzand," in Maria Szuppe and Nalini Balbir (eds.), *Lecteurs et copistes dans les traditions manuscrites iraniennes, indiennes et centrasiatiques = Scribes and Readers in Iranian, Indian and Central Asian Manuscript Traditions* (Rome: Instituto per l'Oriente Carlo Alfonso Nallino, 2014), 81–99, and Gilbert Lazard, "Pehlevi, Pazend et Persan," in Gilbert Lazard (ed.), *La formation de la langue persane* (Paris: Peeters, 1995), 133–140.

18. On Neryosang Dhaval, see Shahpurshah Hormasji Hodivala, "The Dates of Hormazdyār Rāmyār and Neryosang Dhaval," *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute* 8 (1926): 85–133. On the Sanskrit version of the text, see Almut Degener, "Neryosanghs Sanskrit-Übersetzung von Škand gumānīk vičār," in Ronald E. Emmerick and Dieter Weber (eds.), *Corolla Iranica: Papers in Honour of Prof. Dr. David Neil MacKenzie on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday on April 8th, 1991* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 49–58.

19. The portrayal of the Jews in Zoroastrian literature has been the focus of past studies; see James Darmesteter, "Textes Pehlvis relatifs au Judaisme: première partie," *Revue des Études Juives* 18 (1889): 1–15; idem, "Textes Pehlvis relatifs au Judaisme: seconde partie," *Revue des Études*

Juives 19 (1889): 41–56; Louis H. Gray, "Kai Lohrasp and Nebuchadrezzar," *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunde des Morgenlande* 18 (1904): 291–298; Louis H. Gray, "Pahlavi Literature, Jews in," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (12 vols.; New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 9:283–294 (1905). See also the discussion by Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, "Theologies and Hermeneutics," in Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 211–234, esp. 232.

20. See Jean de Menasce, *Une apologétique mazdéenne du IXe siècle: Škand-Gumānīk Vičār: La solution décisive des doutes* (Fribourg en Suisse: Librarie de l'Université, 1945); Dieter Taillieu, "Zoroastrian Polemic against Manichaeism in Škand-Gumānīg Wizār and Dēnkard III" (Ph.D. diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2004) [Dutch]; Samuel Frank Thrope, "Contradictions and Vile Utterances: The Zoroastrian Critique of Judaism in the Škand Gumānīg Wizār" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012). For a summary of the manuscripts of the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*, see Thrope, "Contradictions," 22–23 and 234–236. Other editions and translations of the primary texts include the following: Edward William West (ed. and trans.), *Pahlavi Texts Part 3: Dînâ-î Maînôg-î Khirad, Sikand-Gûmânîk Vigâr, Sad Dar Pahlavi* (Sacred Books of the East 24; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884); Hoshang Jamaspji Jamasp-Asana and Edward William West (eds.), *Shikand-Gumānīk Vijār: The Pāzand-Sanskrit Text together with a Fragment of the Pahlavi* (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1887); and Raham Asha (ed. and trans.), *Šak-ud-gumānīk-vizār: The Doubt-removing Book of Mardānfarrox* (Paris: Alain Mole, 2015).

21. In addition to the works cited in the footnotes throughout this article, some other studies on the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* include Farhang Mehr, "A Browsing Through the *Škand-Gumānīg Wizār*," in Carlo G. Cereti, Beniamino Melasecchi, and Farrokh Vajifdar (eds.), *Varia Iranica* (Orientalia Romana 7, Serie Orientale Roma 97; Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa l'Oriente, 2004), 73–118; Enrico Raffaelli, "The Astrological Chapter of the *Škand Gumanīg Wizār*," in Gherardo Gnoli and Antonio Panaino (eds.), *Kayd: Studies in History of Mathematics, Astronomy and Astrology in Memory of David Pingree* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e

l'Oriente, 2009), 105–127; Mihaela Timuş, "Changer les mots, altérer les idées: autour du traité apologétique *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*," *Studia Asiatica* 9 (2010): 135–148; Frantz Grenet, "Religions du monde iranien ancient," *École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses* 117 (2010): 117–123.

22. For an overview of the scholarly opinions regarding this name, see Carlo G. Cereti, "*Škand Gumānīg Wizār*," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, s.v. (https://iranicaonline.org/articles/shkand-gumanig-wizar; originally published December 8, 2014): "According to de Menasce (1945, p. 36), the very name of this character or rather his patronymic, reveals that he belongs to the Muslim faith—a hypothesis which seems to be confirmed by the contents of some of the questions that he asked. However, this position is not shared by Jâmâsp-Âsânâ and West (1887, pp. xvi-xvii), according to whom both Mardānfarrox and Mihrayār son of Mahmād are Zoroastrian laymen... [O]ne should also mention that in this context the epithet **hamē *pērōzgar* 'Ever victorious' preceding Mihrayār's name would fit better a Zoroastrian than a Muslim."

23. It is still an open question whether the 'Judaism' represented in these chapters is merely the author's foil for what is actually an attack against the dominant religion of Islam, or whether it is some form of Judaism that has been influenced by its Islamic surroundings. The extreme view is that expressed by de Menasce, "Jews and Judaism in the Third Book of the Dēnkart," 45: "the attacks on Judaism and retorts against attacks allegedly made by Jews against Zoroastrianism, are really aimed at Islamic teachings, shared, it is true, by Judaism, but more characteristic of what was more fundamentally repugnant to Zoroastrians in Islam and also more of a danger to them at the time." It appears that this substitution of Judaism for Islam was also common in Christian apologetics, according to Sidney H. Griffith, "Jews and Muslims in Christian Syriac and Arabic Texts of the Ninth Century," *Jewish History* 3 (1988): 65–94: "A review of the published Christian apologetic texts from the first Abbasid century reveals that the writers of these defensive tracts consistently characterize Islamic beliefs and practices as Jewish, or at least as Jewishly influenced" (65).

24. This is the translation of Mansour Shaki and Daniel Gimaret, "Dahrī, i. In Middle Persian Literature," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, s.v. (https://iranicaonline.org/articles/dahri-ar#pt1; originally published December 15, 1993), with some minor changes. For a pair of important articles on the Dahris in the late antique and early Islamic milieu, see Patricia Crone, "The Quranic *Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection (Part I)" and "The Quranic *Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection (Part II)," in eadem, *The Qur'ānic Pagans and Related Matters: Collected Studies in Three Volumes, Volume 1*, ed. Hanna Siurua (Islamic History and Civilization 129; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 125–182, esp. 162–164 on Zoroastrianism.

25. Shaki, "Dahrī." See also the accompanying entry by Daniel Gimaret, "Dahrī, ii. In the Islamic Period," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, s.v. (https://iranicaonline.org/articles/dahri-ar#pt2; originally published December 15, 1993).

26. Shaki, "Dahrī," with some minor changes.

27. See Carlo G. Cereti "Some Notes on the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*," in Dieter Weber (ed.), *Languages of Iran, Past and Present: Iranian Studies in Memoriam David Neil MacKenzie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 1–15, esp. the overview on 1. For an introduction to and critical edition of the *Zādspram*, see Philippe Gignoux and Ahmad Tafazzoli, *Anthologie de Zādspram: Édition critique du texte pehlevi, traduit et commenté* (Studia Iranica 13; Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1993).

28. Translation from Cereti, "Some Notes," 5.

29. See *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* 9.1–3 and *Dēnkard* Book III, ch. 239.

30. Cereti, "Some Notes," 3.

31. Translation from Cereti, "Some Notes," 2–3, with slight adjustments. This trope transcends confessional boundaries and is attested in Muslim and Christian heresiographies.

32. *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* 14.3; Thrope, "Contradictions," 222.

33. Thrope, "Contradictions," 11.

34. On the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*'s engagement with Islamic sources, see Thrope, "Contradictions," 11–12 and 27–28; for the New Testament, Philippe Gignoux, "Comment le polémiste mazdéen du *Škand Gumānīg Vīzār* a-t-il utilisé les citations du Nouveau Testament?" in Christelle

Jullien (ed.), *Controverses des chrétiens dans l'Iran sassanide* (Chrétiens en terre d'Iran 2; Studia Iranica 36; Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 2008): 59–67; for the Old Testament, Dan D. Y. Shapira, "On Biblical Quotations in Pahlavi," *Henoch* 23 (2001): 175–183. Regarding Middle Persian translations of the Bible, see Shaul Shaked, "Bible, iv. Middle Persian Translations," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, s.v. (https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bible-iv; originally published December 15, 1989); of Manichaean writings, Werner Sundermann, "Das Manichäerkapitel des Škand Gumānīg Wizār in der Darstellung und Deutung Jean de Menasces," in Johannes van Oort, Otto Wermelinger, and Gregor Wurst (eds.), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 49; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 325–337, as well as Dieter Taillieu, "Glossary to the Zoroastrian Middle Persian Polemics against Manichaeism," in François de Blois and Nicholas Sims-Williams (eds.), *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts, Volume II: Texts from Iraq and Iran (Texts in Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Zoroastrian Middle Persian)* (Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum, Subsidia 4; Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 121–145.

35. Cereti, "Some Notes," 5.

36. See Thrope, "Contradictions," 14–17.

37. Thrope, "Contradictions," 8.

38. For an overview, see Thrope, "Contradictions," 32.

39. See Judah Rosenthal, "Ḥiwi al-Balkhi: A Comparative Study," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 38 (1948): 317–342.

40. See Israel Davidson, *Saadia's Polemic Against Ḥiwi al-Balkhi: A Fragment Edited from a Genizah MS* (Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary 5; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1915).

41. See Thrope, "Contradictions," 218, n. 128.

42. See Jacob Neusner, "A Zoroastrian Critique of Judaism (Škand Gumanik Vičar, Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen: A New Translation and Exposition)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1963): 283–294; Jacob Neusner, "Škand Miscellanies," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 86 (1966): 414–416; Samuel Thrope, "Unnecessary Angels: Jewish Angelology in the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*," *Iranian Studies* 48 (2015): 33–53; Samuel Thrope, "Zoroastrian Exegetical Parables in the Škand Gumānīg Wizār,"

Iran and the Caucasus 17 (2013): 253–274; Samuel Thrope, "The Genealogy of Abraham: The Zoroastrian Critique of Judaism beyond Jewish Literature," *History of Religions* 54 (2015): 318–345.

43. For an overview of the different interpretations of this term, see Thrope, "Contradictions," 197, n. 4.

44. Thrope, "Contradictions," 213.

45. See David Neil MacKenzie, "*nibēg*," *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 59, and Thrope, "Contradictions," 24.

46. This is the opinion of Neusner, "Zoroastrian Critique," 283.

47. See Shaked, "Zoroastrian Polemics," 89, 97, and 102–103.

48. See Thrope, "Contradictions," 27, and David J. Halperin and Gordon D. Newby, "Two Castrated Bulls: A Study in the Haggadah of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102 (1982): 631–638.

49. On this name, see Thrope, "Contradictions," 73–78.

50. Translations are from Thrope, "Contradictions," 215.

51. Translation from Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (eds.), *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 14.

52. Chapter 13, lines 49–53; Thrope, "Contradictions," 215.

53. Chapter 13, line 75; ibid., 216.

54. Chapter 13, line 29; ibid., 217.

55. Chapter 13, line 108; ibid., 219.

56. Chapter 13, line 109; ibid., 219.

57. Chapter 13, line 115; ibid., 219.

58. Chapter 13, line 29; ibid., 214.

59. Chapter 13, line 33; ibid., 214.

60. Chapter 13, line 147; ibid., 221. See also line 115: God's "will and command are contradictory and discordant"; ibid., 219.

61. See Shaul Shaked, "Islam," in Stausberg and Vevaina (eds.), *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, 491–498, esp. 495; Vevaina, "Theologies and Hermeneutics," 225–226. Also in this volume, see the discussions of Zoroastrian polemics against Manichaeism and Christianity by Marco Frenschkowski, "Christianity," 457–476, esp. 472–473 and Manfred Hutter, "Manichaeism in Iran," 477–490, esp. 485–488.

62. Shaked, "Islam," 495.

63. Chapter 14, lines 4–8; Shapira, "Biblical Quotations," 180.

64. Shapira, "Biblical Quotations," 180.

65. Chapter 14, line 32; Thrope, "Contradictions," 223.

66. For more on the Iranian elements in this talmudic tale from the "Chapter of the Pious," see the present author's forthcoming essay, "Clusters of Iranian Loanwords in Talmudic Folkore: *The Chapter of the Pious* (*b. Taʿanit* 18b–26a) in its Sasanian Context," in Geoffrey Herman and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (eds.), *The Aggada of the Bavli and its Cultural World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2018), 125–148.

67. Chapter 14, lines 71–73 and 79–87; Thrope, "Contradictions," 227.

68. See, e.g., the work by David Thomas (ed. and trans.), *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

69. See Gabriel Said Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu: ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), esp. 72, 78–79, 81–83.

70. For examples of Syriac texts on Islam, see Michael Philip Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). On Geonic and Karaite texts, see the discussions above. For an example of a relevant Judeo-Persian text, see David Neil MacKenzie, "An Early Jewish-Persian Argument," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31 (1968): 249–269.

The Long Shadow of Sasanian Christianity: The Limits of Iraqi Islamization in the Abbasid Period

Thomas A. Carlson

Abstract

The Islamic conquest of the Sasanian Empire inaugurated, among many other transformations, the progressive Islamization of the region. The pace and mechanisms of this transformation remain poorly understood. Yet the progress of Islamization in the capital province of the Abbasid caliphate is a significant hidden variable in the study of Muslim relations with non-Muslims and the Abbasid state's interactions with its subject populations. This paper adopts a geographical approach to Islamization, looking for differential developments in different areas within Iraq, especially the distinctions between newly founded and pre-Islamic cities, and between urban and rural society. The study compares Muslim geographical sources (such as al-Balādhurī, Ibn Ḥawqal, and al-Muqaddasī) with Arabic Christian sources (including Ilyās b. ʿUbayd al-Dimashqī and ʿAmr b. Mattā). Rather than attempting a quantitative approach on such uneven data, this paper offers a contextually sensitive reading of relevant literary passages, anecdotes which often unselfconsciously reveal what each author presents as normal or unusual, not only among reports of multi-religious presence, but also the changing distributions of mosques, bishops, and monasteries. This paper argues that Islamization was slightly more rapid in southern Iraq than in the north, but as late as *ca.* 400/1000, substantial areas of the countryside had been only lightly influenced by Islamization. This suggests that we must explain mass Islamization by forces relevant to the period of Abbasid disintegration or later,

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rather than to that of Abbasid dominance as scholars have heretofore assumed.

Introduction

Nothing about al-Wāsiṭ was original. As an Arab Muslim city in southern Iraq, founded by the Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj, it had been preceded two generations earlier by Kufa and Basra.[1] It was not even the first city on its stretch of the Tigris, but was founded across the river from the still very lively Sasanian settlement of Kashkar (in Arabic, Kaskar).[2] This earlier city continued to be an important Christian center into the late Abbasid period; its bishop administered the Iraqi churches during vacancies in the office of catholicos, the highest-ranking church leader in Iraq.[3] Yet in the fourth/tenth century, the geographers Ibn Ḥawqal (d. after 362/973) and al-Muqaddasī (d. after 380/990) no longer remembered the existence of the pre-Islamic city; instead they described al-Wāsiṭ as a city founded by Muslims, occupying both banks of the river.[4] The new Arab Muslim city had not only engulfed its predecessor town, but had also erased the memory of an important Christian center. The question facing scholars is how this happened, not just at al-Wāsiṭ but across Iraq, and also how quickly and thoroughly this transformation occurred.

Richard Bulliet's 1979 book *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* claimed only to be a tentative "essay," and yet the field has largely taken it as the final word on the demographic process of Islamization in Iraq, as in most of the Middle East.[5] While earlier scholars had proposed that mass conversion to Islam was a phenomenon of the Umayyad period, Bulliet proposed a slower chronology. Bulliet suggested that Muslims came to outnumber non-Muslims in Iraq only in the 270s/880s, much later than previous scholarship had thought, and that Muslims approached 90 percent of the population only at the end of the fourth/tenth century.[6] The details of his argument need not occupy us here; despite some criticisms, this has become the standard chronology of Islamization in Iraq.

Further, Michael Morony proposed that by the third/ninth century, Muslims had probably become a "virtual majority" of Iraq's population, and that the process of mass conversion may have paralleled the earlier sectarian competition for converts among "Nestorian" and "Monophysite" Christians.[7] Unlike Bulliet's concept of "social conversion," namely that changing religion was as much or more about moving social groups as it was about dogma, Morony argued that conversion was fastest as a result of social dislocation, rather than as a cause for it, and that, conversely, the ability of certain groups to preserve earlier identities "did not depend on regional predominance but on cultural or social density."[8] Morony briefly references the conversion to Islam of Christian Arab nomads.[9] In an agrarian region such as Mesopotamia, however, the rural sedentary population was necessarily much larger than the nomadic sector, and Morony does not discuss the progress of Islamization among the farmers. Instead, the conversions which he does discuss are those of Zoroastrians, not to Islam, but to Christianity.[10] Counterintuitive though it may seem, it is even possible that the Christian population of Iraq was rising during the early Islamic period as a result of Zoroastrianism's loss of state sponsorship.

More recent scholarship discussing conversion to Islam in Iraq addresses interreligious dialogue and polemics, as well as conversion narratives.[11] Wadi Haddad has examined a few third-/ninth-century apologetic texts, particularly the correspondence between ʿAbd Allāh b. Ismāʿīl al-Hāshimī and ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Isḥāq al-Kindī, as well as ʿAlī b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī's (d. third/ninth century) defense of Islam, to demonstrate some of the different strategies used to make conversion to Islam appealing or unappealing.[12] Giovanna Calasso has discussed accounts of conversion, devotional zeal, and religious instruction in a Basran biographical collection of the third/ninth century.[13] Sidney Griffith has argued that during the first centuries of Muslim rule, in the social context of increasing Christian conversion to Islam, clergy writing in Syriac and Arabic used Islamic cultural categories to construct their denominationally distinct identities.[14] David Bertaina has explored the shifting uses of interreligious dialogue texts from the pre-Islamic period to the early

second millennium CE, by Christians and Muslims, in Iraq and more broadly.[15] These scholars all contextualize their documents in Bulliet's timeline for a "wave of conversions" in third-/ninth-century Iraq, and ascribe to Christian authors the goal of "stemming the tide of conversion."[16] Likewise, Michael Penn approaches conversion on the basis of narrative Syriac sources, but he questions the rapidity of Bulliet's timeline and counters that into the mid-third/late-ninth century, "the actual number of converts from Christianity to Islam did not threaten the survival of Syriac Christianity"; nevertheless, he also suggests that "the threat of mass conversion weighed heavily on the minds of Syriac authors" during the early Islamic period.[17] All such texts are elite productions, relevant only to the small portion of the population which was literate, and therefore this scholarship does not revise our understanding of the pace of non-elite Islamization.

In 2005, Bulliet explored whether dynamics of geographical diffusion might add nuance to the model of innovation diffusion through social contact which he proposed in 1979.[18] His use of spatial diffusion was limited in this work, primarily serving to link a progress of conversion with shifting onomastic patterns observed in a fourth-/tenth-century biographical dictionary. He concluded that for Iran, the object of his 2005 chapter, the chronology which he had proposed in 1979 was biased in favor of urban centers, and needed to be revised as much as a century later in order to account for slower rural adoption of Islam.[19] The urban and rural sectors of Iraq's population were divided as sharply as Iran's, so Bulliet's proposed timeline for the Islamization of Iraq might likewise be revised later in order to account for the urban bias of his study.

The present article considers what geographical texts might tell us about the diffusion of Islam in Iraq. As Zayde Antrim has indicated, a diverse Arabic "discourse of place" developed in the early medieval period, representing not a unified genre but a shared set of assumptions about place and space.[20] This discourse included books of "historical geography" (such as *Kitāb Futūḥ al-buldān* by Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir al-Balādhurī [d. ca. 279/892]), works of the Balkhī school of mapmaking

(such as *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ* by Abū'l-Qāsim b. ʿAlī al-Naṣībī Ibn Ḥawqal and *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* by Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Bannāʾ al-Shāmī al-Muqaddasī), and other genres. The *Kitāb al-Diyārāt* of Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Shābushtī (d. 388/998) likewise organizes descriptions of monasteries into geographical regions. Another form of geographical thinking is displayed in lists of Christian dioceses compiled in Syriac and Arabic, reflecting the spatial diffusion of ecclesiastical infrastructure and hierarchies of precedence. Due to the literary nature of all these texts, composed in idiosyncratic ways for individual purposes, I have not attempted a numerical or computational analysis of these sources, such as might yield spuriously precise demographic figures.[21] Instead, I have engaged in close readings of relevant passages, with attention paid to each author's stated goals, rhetorical strategies, and unstated assumptions.

Exploring religious diversity through geographical texts both enables and requires us to consider Islamization as a multifaceted and multidimensional social and cultural transformation, involving more than simply the shifting numbers of people identifying as one religion or another. Geographical texts, like other extant literary works composed by premodern Muslim elites, do not contain demographic data in a form that modern scholars can usefully quantify.[22] Religious adherence in the medieval Middle East also took different forms than it does today, and the dynamics of changing identification from one religion to another could look very different for different people or groups. These dynamics are an active area of research, but the language of "conversion" often presumes a modern Protestant model of religious identity and change that is of dubious applicability to the premodern Middle East.[23] Therefore, due to the limits of our textual sources and the theoretical implications, this article avoids the language of "conversion." Instead, what the texts do give us are statements about changing patterns of urbanization, the nature of land claims, the presence of infrastructure and architecture for religious rituals, and the shape of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. While these details cannot be used to reliably estimate populations, they do

provide a broader picture of the changing place of non-Muslims in what scholars call "Islamic" society, as experienced and recorded by their contemporaries.

Scope and terminology

Both medieval Muslim authors and modern historians have found the plethora of flavors of non-Muslim religion distinctly confusing. While dividing the world into Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians was clear enough, the internal diversity among Jews and Christians has typically held little interest, and much opportunity for misunderstanding, for medieval Muslims and modern Islamicists alike. The potential for confusion is exacerbated by the fact that though there were several different Christian denominations, each one referred to itself primarily as Christian and as orthodox, terms which were therefore useless for distinguishing one from another. To deal with this issue, when medieval Muslims needed to distinguish one denomination from others, they resorted to derogatory polemical labels coined by Christians themselves in the heat of intra-Christian theological controversies, and thus referred to Jacobites, Nestorians, and Melkites. In this they have been followed, largely unquestioningly, by modern Islamicists.

While certain Middle Eastern Christian authors in specific periods have been willing to own such labels, they retain their offensive sting for most people so described, and are as misleading as most insults. Thus, here I will refer to the so-called "Nestorians," headquartered in Iraq, as the Church of the East or as Eastern Syriac Christians, due to their use of Syriac as their liturgical language and their location as the furthest east of the ancient churches.[24] So-called "Jacobites" are customarily labeled by Syriacists, for lack of better options, either as Syriac Orthodox or Western Syriac Christians, although both labels may be challenged. Finally, while Syriac scholars as well as Islamicists often retain the dismissive term "Melkites" for Syriac- or Arabic-speaking Christians who agree with the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon (and thus with the Byzantine

Empire), here I will adopt the label "Chalcedonian Orthodox" for this community.

It is also necessary to say a word about the geographical scope of this paper, specifically regarding the physical extent of "Iraq" in this context. As the history of Mosul in the early twentieth century and in the past few years reminds us, boundaries are often made rather than given. Medieval Iraq has typically been defined as the region surrounding the lower courses of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, defined to the south by the emptying of those rivers into the Persian Gulf, to the west by the desert which separates it from Syria, and to the east by the mountains leading up to the Iranian plateau. The Khuzistan plain, sometimes considered part of Iraq and sometimes separated from it, will be excluded from this article. The northern boundary is more problematic. One can follow the Tigris and the Euphrates northward into Syria, eastern Anatolia, and eventually into the mountains inhabited by medieval Armenians and Kurds. Different medieval geographers drew the northern edge of Iraq at different places.[25] Morony noted that initially the Mosul region was included as part of Iraq at the time of the Arab conquests, since it was conquered from the direction of al-Sawād (the agricultural region of southern Iraq), although it was joined to al-Jazīrah (upper Mesopotamia) from the 60s/680s onward.[26] For the purposes of this paper, I include the plain around Mosul as part of Iraq, although not as far west as Sinjar. Mosul is included in part because that area was conquered and often ruled from southern Iraq, and in part as a case usefully different from developments further south. The recently studied trajectory of Islamization in Syria differs from that of Iraq in some instructive ways, and will also be used for comparison.[27]

Uncertain foundations

The initial conquests of Iraq were reported in traditions (*akhbār*) gathered into a geographical framework by Balādhurī in the third/late-ninth century. In addition to the common prosopographical and military

interests of this genre, Balādhurī devotes a third of his section on southern Iraq (Sawād) to the foundation of the new cities, especially Kufa, al-Wāsiṭ, Baghdad, and Sāmarrāʾ, as well as lesser foundations such as al-Hāshimiyyah and al-Mutawakkiliyyah.[28] The foundation of Basra receives a separate treatment later in the work.[29] In the north, Mosul was founded as a garrisoned fort that grew into a walled city during the Marwanid period.[30]

These cities, of course, were centers of power and patronage for the Muslim ruling elite, and urban garrisons were the highest concentrations of the new religion in the region. As Morony points out, "At first the Muslim population was virtually identical with the army and its dependents who settled in the garrison towns."[31] Yet these four to seven centers were fewer than the garrisoned cities of Syria which formed the nodes of early Islamization in that province.[32] The centrality of these Muslim centers in Iraq is suggested by Balādhurī's report that an early garrison in al-Madāʾin was removed and consolidated into Kufa.[33] He mentions very few Muslims living in Iraqi towns which predated the conquests, although his references to a church partitioned into a partial mosque in Hīt on the Euphrates, as well as mosques in al-Madāʾin, Anbar, and the northern city of Haditha suggest a Muslim presence in those towns.[34] In general, however, compared to the Muslim garrisons of Syria, those in Iraq were more concentrated at fewer centers, which limited the social contacts which might lead to Islam's diffusion.

The new cities did not restrict non-Muslim urbanization, however. Despite the famous anecdote about al-Ḥajjāj sending (non-Muslim) peasants away from the garrison cities, we should not think of Kufa or Basra as exclusively Muslim.[35] Captives and slaves, as well as non-Muslim service workers and merchants, inhabited these cities very shortly after their founding, and we simply do not know how many such people there were. Kufa was so closely associated with the older Christian Arab city of al-Ḥīrah that Ibn Ḥawqal linked the former's growth to the latter's decline.[36] Similarly, Basra was near to Pĕrāth dĕ-Mayshān (al-Furāt), whose metropolitan archbishop may have moved into Basra by the beginning of the Abbasid period.[37] Al-Wāsiṭ was founded across the river from

Kashkar and encapsulated it with its non-Muslim population.[38] Mosul grew up across from the Sasanian town of Nineveh, and around a pre-existing fort and a monastery called Mar Īshōʿyahb which had been founded at the end of the Sasanian period.[39] Baghdad had a monastery within a dozen years of its founding.[40] Sāmarrāʾ had multiple churches and monasteries in the 230s/850s, when al-Mutawakkil ordered their demolition according to a fourth/tenth-century historian.[41] As counter-intuitive as it seems, we cannot even be certain that Muslims remained a demographic majority within the cities they founded. These would be the prime sites of contact between Muslims and non-Muslims, but urban immigration rates may have sometimes outstripped conversion rates. In any event, non-Muslims long remained demographically dominant in the pre-Islamic cities of Iraq: Ibn Ḥawqal reports that Takrit, on the northern edge of Iraq, was still majority Christian in the fourth/mid-tenth century.[42]

In most agrarian societies, farmers outnumber city-dwellers by a large ratio, so this Muslim urban population was probably large only relative to other early medieval cities, not when compared to the rural non-Muslim population. Hugh Kennedy has estimated that the urban population of early Islamic Iraq was up to approximately half a million, but reliable estimates of the rural population are not available.[43] J. C. Russell suggests a total population of nine to ten million in the Tigris–Euphrates valley in that period, although the basis for his estimate is not clear.[44] By contrast, Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones critique the "normally sober Russell" for credulity in his interpretation of literary sources and implausible calculations; they instead propose that the premodern population of Iraq ranged between one and two and a half million, peaking around 180/800.[45] The basis of their lower estimate is unstated, and therefore it cannot be evaluated.

The Muslim geographers include a report (*khabar*) that ʿUthmān b. Ḥunayf, the governor of Iraq for ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, "sealed the necks of 550,000 uncircumcised men" (i.e., Christians and Zoroastrians), a practice of attaching lead seals to cords around the necks of defeated enemies, captives, and slaves, which was later associated with the payment of

jizyah.[46] If this number is reliable, it might imply a non-Muslim population in that period of at least one and a half to two and a half million, depending on the average number of dependents assumed for each adult male. This is close enough to the estimate of McEvedy and Jones to make one suspect that this report may be the ultimate basis for their proposed population total. Yet Morony noticed that this number pertains only to the area around Kufa, not to all of Iraq, and Balādhurī reported an alternate tradition which divided the tax-collection in al-Sawād between ʿUthmān b. Ḥunayf, west of the Tigris, and Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān east of it.[47] On the other hand, Balādhurī cites a different report according to which ʿUthmān b. Ḥunayf accompanied Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān to Khāniqīn, a town east of the Tigris.[48] This latter report may undercut the theory of a partition of Iraq between two tax collectors, and raises the question what the precise geographical scope of the previously reported neck-sealing activities might be.

It is equally unclear how to use a report included by Balādhurī that if ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb had divided al-Sawād among the Muslims, there would have been only three peasants per Muslim.[49] Does this number imply that Muslims were one quarter of the population in this district? Or that the non-Muslim population of Iraq was three times the population of Muslims everywhere? Or were the "three peasants" three households, while the enumeration of Muslims perhaps included women? Or were both numbers exclusively adult men, but with a differential number of dependents among the military elite as among the peasant class? It is very difficult to move from literary references, even apparently precise ones, to numerical conclusions. The usefulness of numbers in literary sources for population estimates depends on many questionable factors, including the reliability of the scribal transmission of the texts, the stability of the oral transmission of the report (*khabar*), and, perhaps most dangerously, the ability of a newly arrived foreign ruler to count and tax every individual peasant. If Russell's higher population estimate is more accurate, and if this report about ʿUmar's governor still has any historical value, it may indicate instead that primitive Muslim *jizyah*

collection was more haphazard and faulty than scholars have so far realized.

Outside of the cities, Balādhurī was particularly interested in Muslim landowners and land acquisition. He listed individual Muslim Arab landowners in southern Iraq by name, and how they acquired their property.[50] He was careful to point out, both for the region of Diyār Rabīʿah around Mosul and separately for al-Furāt in southern Iraq, that these lands were not confiscated from legitimate owners; rather, the lands had been abandoned, or were previously uncultivable and reclaimed from swamp, or their owners converted to Islam.[51] He enumerated categories of land claimed by ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, from which subsequent caliphs granted properties to Arabs: properties of those who died or fled in the conquest, properties of the Persian royal family, uncultivated swamps and forests, and Dayr Yazīd.[52] Balādhurī also mentioned a handful of Persian landowners (*dahāqīn*, sing. *dihqān*) who converted to Islam and whose land claims were subsequently recognized by the caliph, perhaps hinting at a perceived threat of confiscation.[53] The fact that his only examples for this phenomenon come from obscure locations, which he enumerates, may suggest that conversions of the *dihqān* class was not the norm at such an early date. Although he lists four landowners in the south and none in the north, his disclaimer about land confiscation in northern Iraq suggests that some Arab landowners in the north adopted Islam.[54]

Balādhurī's interest in Muslim land claims hints at differences between the rural societies of southern and northern Iraq, specifically the more rapid formation of a Muslim landowner class in the south contrasted with the larger numbers of Muslim Arab nomads in the north. This was not his intent, of course; his concern for the provenance of land claims was likely motivated by their relevance for legal or fiscal disputes in the third/ninth century when he compiled this work.[55] Even so, on the basis of this source and others, Morony suggests that the Arab conquests reduced pastoral nomadism in favor of the new cities.[56] By contrast, it is clear that many Bedouin remained in the north around Mosul, of whom many converted early to Islam.[57] Nevertheless, as Chase Robin-

son points out, wealthy rural Christian landowners seem to have persisted longer and more prominently in the north.[58] The fourth-/tenth-century Muslim geographer Ibn Ḥawqal, who generally had little interest in religious differences, still mentions these wealthy Christian landowners in a village not far from Arbil in the north.[59] The process of land reclamation or bringing unfarmed land into cultivation, which Balādhurī indicates repeatedly for the "great swamp" north of Basra, may have enabled a more rapid rise in Muslim landowners in southern Iraq.[60] This in turn may have encouraged a slightly greater rate of Islamization among the peasants brought in to work that land, as happened at a later period in East Bengal, and thus initiated a slow divergence in the religious makeup of society along a south-north axis.[61]

Mosques and monasteries

Unlike Ibn Ḥawqal, Muqaddasī, writing in the fourth/late-tenth century, claims to be interested in the relative preponderance of different religious groups.[62] His discussion of religious groups, whether in particular locations or in Iraq as a whole, is nevertheless far from systematic. He mentions several mosques in towns, which indicates a degree of diffusion of Islam beyond the garrison cities and caliphal capitals founded by Muslims. However, it also indicates that the presence of a mosque in such towns could not be taken for granted. Indeed, Muqaddasī mentions two towns both named al-Jāmiʿayn ("the two mosques"), one in the south near Kufa, and one further north, near Sāmarrāʾ.[63] This suggests that for a town to have two mosques was so unusual as to change the name of the settlement. Yet apart from the six district capitals of Iraq, he mentions mosques in fewer than half of the towns which he singles out for description, and fewer than a fifth of the towns which he names.[64] His list of mosques is likely incomplete, as his list of villages certainly is, and of course these proportions cannot be taken as a percentage of all villages. But we might presume that his selection of villages was biased in favor of "important" settlements which had attracted the attention of Muslim elites for one reason or another, and such towns and villages were also

more likely than other ("unimportant") settlements to have a mosque. In other words, settlements without mosques were probably more preponderant in the Iraq of Muqaddasī's day than in the list of settlements which he presents.

Muqaddasī also asserts that there were "many" shrines in Iraq, and yet the examples he cites are almost exclusively urban. He mentioned one site associated with Abraham and one with Noah, which may have been shared with the local Jewish and Christian populations rather than exclusively Muslim.[65] Apart from these, the monuments of ʿAlī and Ḥusayn are the only specifically Muslim holy places which Muqaddasī did not locate within Kufa, Basra, Baghdad, or al-Madāʾin.[66] By contrast, he lists fifteen Muslim shrines in Basra, six in Baghdad, one in al-Madāʾin, and one in Kufa, and he alludes to the existence of others.[67] Coupled with his references to town mosques, this may suggest that in Muqaddasī's time, late in the fourth/tenth century, Islam was still primarily an urban phenomenon beginning to spread into towns and some larger villages. If this is the case, then Muslims must have remained significantly less than half, perhaps no more than a quarter, of the total population of Iraq at this time, far less than the 90 percent estimate prevailing in current scholarship. Such a small proportion of Muslims would explain why Muqaddasī began his discussion of religious groups in Iraq, even before listing the different Islamic groups which interested him, by stating briefly, "There are many Magians [i.e. Zoroastrians] in this region, and its *dhimmah* [sic] are both Christians and Jews."[68] The fact about religious diversity in Buyid Iraq which Muqaddasī found most noteworthy was the large numbers of non-Muslims.[69]

Although Muqaddasī evinced no specific interest in any non-Muslim population above others, the fourth-/tenth-century *Kitāb al-Diyārāt* of Shābushtī reveals that the Christian monasteries of Iraq continued to function largely unhindered into the Buyid period. Scholars may dispute whether the content of such a literary work, designed at least as much to entertain as to inform, is more factual or fictive.[70] Yet this debate has largely taken place over the value of the particular anecdotes related, anecdotes relating the personal interactions between elite Muslim men

and Christians of various ages and genders, ranging from the miraculous to the seductive. Just as hagiography often yields reliable social information in its incidental details, the "scenery" for the entertaining anecdotes may be more consistently factual than the events narrated. Among incidental details we might include whether a monastery was inhabited or not, and the dates of individual monasteries' particular festivals; it is not clear how such details, not entertaining in themselves and unnecessary to understand particular tales, would serve the belle-lettristic purpose. As Kilpatrick notes, Shābushtī also indicates at one point that he had visited Basra in southern Iraq, and was informed about a marvel inside a monastery in northern Mesopotamia by the Christians of that region, perhaps suggesting that he traveled the full length of Iraq and wrote from firsthand knowledge.[71] This fourth-/tenth-century author mentions thirty-six monasteries in Iraq and around Mosul.[72] Of these, he describes at least twenty of them as inhabited by monks, and probably at least three more were functioning. By contrast, he explicitly identifies only three monasteries as ruined, abandoned, or inhabited by travelers, leaving ten whose status at the end of the fourth/tenth century is entirely unclear. Even if all ten of these were abandoned at that time, most of the monasteries known to Shābushtī continued to function. Many of these had functioned continuously since the Sasanian period, while others were founded more recently.[73]

There are many ways scholars might misinterpret these numbers, which we must carefully avoid. No conclusion can be drawn from the fact that Shābushtī lists more active monasteries than Muqaddasī lists towns with mosques; both lists are incomplete, and the two texts were compiled for different purposes. The ratio between the two lists cannot be extrapolated to the religious demographics of Iraq's population as a whole, for two reasons, one mathematical and one historical. First, the mathematical reason: without knowing the total numbers of each category, the ratio of two non-random samples is meaningless. Second, even if the ratio of monasteries to mosques were known, the two types of buildings performed very different religious and social functions, so it is by no means clear that a Muslim population would have the same number

of mosques as a comparable Christian population would have monasteries.[74] But the numbers of active, uncertain, and abandoned monasteries also cannot be generalized to the greater (unknowable) set of all Iraqi monasteries, to suggest perhaps a bounded range on the ratio of Islamization since the conquests three-and-a-half centuries earlier. Medieval monasteries were like modern American business start-ups: most were small, never famous, and of brief duration, many monasteries not long surviving their founders, so even in the best of circumstances we would expect a certain number of failed monasteries and some rapid turnover.[75] In short, Shābushtī's list of active, uncertain, and abandoned monasteries cannot be used computationally.

But it can be used culturally. What these numbers do indicate is that when one fourth/tenth-century Muslim author such as Shābushtī imagined monasteries in Iraq, some of which he may have visited himself, he imagined them not solitary and deserted in a landscape, but peopled with monks. Generalizing from his assumptions to those of his educated Muslim audience is difficult for all the usual reasons, but we might venture a few suggestions based on Shābushtī's rhetoric. It was evidently not surprising to Shābushtī's audience for a monastery to be inhabited, since it could be indicated tersely with a single word such as *ʿāmir* ("occupied").[76] Shābushtī specified whether the monastery was occupied or abandoned in a slight majority of cases, which suggests that he did not expect his audience to assume one way or the other. Without such an overarching assumption, the fact that most of the monasteries which he mentions were occupied probably indicates that the cities, towns, and rivers of Iraq were still accustomed to seeing active, rather than ruined, monasteries in the fourth/tenth century.

The continuation of Christian infrastructure

A changing geographical distribution of the Christian presence in Iraq should also be reflected by shifting locations of bishops and metropolitan archbishops. Like monasteries, the number and extent of bishoprics was affected extremely slowly by Islamic rule. Three nearly complete

lists of Eastern Syriac bishops, each evidently independent of the others,[77] survive from the Buyid period or earlier: one included in the acts of a church council in 410 CE during the Sasanian period, one composed at the end of the third/ninth century by Ilyās b. ʿUbayd, the Eastern Syriac metropolitan of Damascus, and one in the *Mukhtaṣar al-ākhbār al-bīʿiyyah*, a text composed anonymously in the fifth/early-eleventh century.[78] The first list was a component of a Christian hierarchical reform within the Sasanian Empire to establish increased centralized control by the catholicos, while the second was composed as part of a canon law text in the Abbasid Empire. The purpose for the composition of the third is not fully clear, inserted in the middle of historical reports pertaining to the pre-Islamic period, even though the list does not reflect pre-Islamic conditions.

Like monasteries, we need to be careful not to treat the numbers of bishops as proxies for Christian population levels.[79] The shape of the hierarchy tended to be conservative, changing more slowly than the growth, movement, or decline of Christian populations. Thus the Eastern Syriac patriarch continued to be headquartered at the Sasanian capital of al-Madāʾin until twenty years after the foundation of Baghdad, a century and a half after the Muslim Arab conquest of the Sasanian Empire. Nevertheless, medieval Syriac churches did not maintain merely titular dioceses, offices with the rank of bishop but without real local churches or parishes under them, as the Roman Catholic Church did until the middle of the twentieth century. Thus episcopal lists might indicate Christian institutional strongholds, and perhaps important Christian centers. David Wilmshurst has raised the concern, however, that these lists of dioceses were even more conservative than the actual shape of the ecclesiastical hierarchy at the time each list was composed, continuing to include individual bishoprics that had already become defunct.[80] Comparing lists of dioceses with medieval historians' references to specific bishops of each diocese, as collected by Jean-Maurice Fiey, acts as a control upon suspected anachronistic features of the lists.[81] But since medieval historians were not systematic in their references to particular bishops, and tended to mention primarily those who were closer to the seats of power in cen-

tral Iraq, the absence of a chronicle's reference to a particular minor diocese far from the capital cannot be taken as strong evidence for the abolition of that diocese.

Wilmshurst's concern about lists being anachronistic is plausible, yet internal features of each list suggest the degree to which each was up-to-date when it was authored. For example, the anonymous author of the *Mukhtaṣar* noted that the metropolitanate of Bardaʿah and Armenia was abolished by one Catholicos Yuḥannā (presumably either Yuḥannā V, r. 390–401/1000–1011, or Yuḥannā VI, r. 402–411/1012–1020) and reduced to a diocese based in Khilāṭ.[82] This must have been a very recent event for an author writing in the first decades of the fifth/eleventh century. He also noted that the diocese of al-Qubbah was merged into Kashkar, and its rank was taken over by the bishop of al-Bawāzīj.[83] According to the historian ʿAmr b. Mattā (eighth/fourteenth century), this exchange happened under Catholicos ʿAbdīshōʿ (r. 352–376/963–986), no more than fifty years before the *Mukhtaṣar* was composed, and perhaps within the lifetime of the author.[84] Ilyās b. ʿUbayd, of course, wrote before the transfer and listed al-Bawāzīj among the bishops of Beth Garmay, but in this case, a later scribe updated Ilyās's list in two places to mention that al-Bawāzīj was removed from the metropolitanate of Beth Garmay and made subject to the catholicos instead.[85] Another scribal note indicates that the diocese of Bādarāyā and Bākusāyā was abolished and merged into the diocese of Kashkar.[86] We do not know when that happened, but in the *Mukhtaṣar* it is still listed as a separate diocese, and Fiey indicates that bishops of that diocese are attested into the fifth/eleventh century, suggesting that this merger was a post-Buyid development, incorporated into Ilyās's list by a later scribe.[87]

These notes indicate that the authors composed these lists in light of recent developments, and scribes expected the lists to be up-to-date, sometimes adding notes to reflect developments after the original composition. Furthermore, although it was rare for ecclesiastical historians to describe changes to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the references to individual bishops assembled by Fiey demonstrate the historical accuracy of at least the bulk of the shared elements in each list. Rather than

supporting Wilmshurst's suspicion that these documents were already out-of-date when they were composed, it seems that they provide some reliable information on the period of their composition.

Throughout the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods, most of Iraq was divided among four metropolitans: from south to north, Pĕrāth dĕ-Mayshān, Beth Ārāmāyē (the province of the catholicos), Beth Garmay, and Ḥadyab. While each changed between the Sasanian era and the fifth-/eleventh-century list considered here, all three lists show more commonality with one another than difference (apart from changing names for the same places), a fact all the more surprising given the lists' mutual independence.

In the north, the attraction of new Arab Muslim centers is seen in shifting bishop locations, but later lists include as many dioceses as earlier. The Synod of 410 identified the metropolitan's seat as Arbil, with suffragan (subordinate) bishops at Beth Nūhadrā, Beth Bĕgash, Beth Dasin, Ramōnīn (?), Beth Mihqart (?), Dabriyānōs (?), and Ravranḥasan (?).[88] But there seems to be some textual corruption, since Briyānōs is then given as the name of the bishop of Beth Bĕgash later in the same text, and the other three names at the end of the list are not otherwise known as dioceses or even place-names at any period.[89] By the end of the Sasanian period, the city of Nineveh had obtained a bishop, as had the Sasanian "new town" Nawgird in northern Iraq, later known as Haditha.[90] Ilyās's list includes all of these dioceses with the exception of the four dubious ones from the Synod of 410, as well as a new diocese for the Bedouin (al-Bādiyyah), and records that the headquarters of the metropolitan moved from Arbil to the new city of Mosul.[91] The list in the *Mukhtaṣar* differs only in the consolidation of the bishop of Nineveh with the metropolitan of Mosul (indicated under the archaic name of the metropolitanate, Ḥazzah).[92] If we neglect the four dubious dioceses listed in the acts of the Sasanian synod, the only changes in the north of Iraq reflected in the Abbasid and Buyid episcopal lists were the movement of the metropolitan's headquarters to the new city of Mosul, the unification of the bishop of Nineveh with the metropolitan of Mosul, and the creation of a new bishop "for the Bedouin." In other words, northern Iraq's ecclesi-

astical hierarchy was largely stable during the first four centuries of Islamic rule.

In the region of Beth Garmay around Kirkuk and Takrit, there seems to have been some shuffling of diocese names, centers, and boundaries, and one diocese was transferred from this metropolitan to the control of the catholicos in the fourth/mid-tenth century, but each list contains the same number of bishops in this province. The Synod of 410 listed suffragan bishops at Shahrqart, Lashōm, Ārīwān, Daraḥ, and Ḥaravgĕlal.[93] Ilyās listed Shahrqart, al-Bawāzīj (the Arabic name of Ārīwān), Khānījār, and Lashōm, and in place of the last two, introduced Daqūqā and Darābād.[94] The odd thing is that the historian ʿAmr b. Mattā seems to regard Lashōm and Daqūqā as alternate names for the same place, though Ilyās clearly distinguished them in his list.[95] Finally the *Mukhtaṣar* kept Shahrqart and Daqūqā, reintroduced Ḥaravgĕlal as Ḥarbath Jalū, and replaced al-Bawāzīj (which moved to the jurisdiction of the catholicos) and Darābād with dioceses for Tāḥil and Shahrazūr.[96] Although there is confusion as to the names and locations of dioceses, each list agrees that there were five suffragan bishops to the metropolitan, a detail which suggests that there was no institutional weakening, whatever reshuffling might have occurred.

In Beth Ārāmāyē, the province of the catholicos in central Iraq around al-Madāʾin and Baghdad, in addition to absorbing one diocese from Beth Garmay, four new dioceses were created in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries, although one of these seems to have lapsed by the fourth/tenth century. Our analysis is hindered by the fact that the acts of the Synod of 410 did not list the suffragan bishops of the catholicos, only those of the other metropolitans, but none of the dioceses mentioned by Fiey in this region seem to have lapsed in the early Islamic period. Instead, Ilyās's list includes all seven known suffragan dioceses of the late Sasanian period, as well as four new dioceses founded in the Islamic period: ʿUkbarā, Niffar, al-Qaṣrā, and ʿAbdāsī.*97* The list in the *Mukhtaṣar* is the same as Ilyās's, but omits ʿAbdāsī, replacing it with the diocese of al-Bawāzīj which had been transferred from Beth Garmay.[98] In sum, the province of the catholicos continued to have the largest

number of suffragan bishops of any metropolitanate in Iraq, and was larger in the middle of the Buyid period than in the pre-Islamic period, suggesting that the first four centuries of Islamic rule were, on the whole, ones of growth rather than decline for the ecclesiastical hierarchy in central Iraq. But the loss of ʿAbdāsī, even if offset by the annexation of al-Bawāzīj from the province to the north, perhaps indicates a slight amount of institutional slippage in the fourth/tenth century after the period of growth under the earlier Abbasid caliphate.

It is only in the south, around Basra, that we see the unreplaced loss of dioceses. At the Synod of 410, the metropolitan of Pĕrāth dĕ-Mayshān had three suffragan bishops: Karkā, Rīmā, and Nahargūr.[99] Ilyās renamed the metropolitan archdiocese after the new Muslim city of Basra, and gave Arabic names for Karkā (Dastumaysān) and Rīmā (Nahr al-Marā), but Nahargūr was nowhere in view.[100] By the time of the *Mukhtaṣar*, Nahr al-Marā continued under the name Nahr al-Dayr, but Dastumaysān no longer had its own bishop, having been combined into the metropolitan's title, even if this loss was partially offset by a new diocese of Najrān, presumably the settlement of the Christian Arabs expelled from Arabia.[101] Thus, in southern Iraq around Basra, we see the loss of one diocese before 280s/900 and another incorporated into the title of the metropolitan by 390/1000, large losses in a metropolitan province with only a few suffragan bishops at any period.

Taken together, these three episcopal lists suggest a modest growth of the hierarchy in central and northern Iraq, especially in the high Abbasid period, but some shrinking in the south. The slow changes to monastery and ecclesiastical hierarchy distributions suggest some conclusions about demography as well, given the economic basis for monasticism in Iraq and the fact that all bishops in this region were also monks.[102] As Cynthia Villagomez has pointed out, in the early Islamic period, the Church of the East renounced the ideal of self-supporting monasteries of laboring monks in favor of the acquisition of wealth by monasteries, whether in the forms of endowments or donations.[103] Villagomez repeatedly noted the centrality of donations in the monastic economy, including in the primary sources.[104] While some Muslims, even

Muslim rulers, gave money to monasteries, the majority of donors would have been Christian, and increasing Islamization would progressively defund the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the monasteries in Iraq.[105] The fact that the hierarchy and the monasteries had been so little affected by almost four centuries of Muslim rule, including by the economic crisis of fourth-/tenth-century Iraq, suggests that there was no massive defunding such as we would expect had 90 percent of the Iraq's Christian population converted to Islam, as most scholars assume.[106] It would seem that the Christian populations of Iraq preserved sufficient "social density," to use Morony's term, to maintain distinctively Christian social structures, and thus to maintain Christian identities and even to assimilate new converts, if Morony's suggested link between "social density" and resistance to assimilation holds.[107]

Conclusion

As the Muslims' new foundation of al-Wāsiṭ grew, it did so at Kaskar's expense, both physically and notionally. Yet Kaskar lingered, in a variety of different forms. Shābushtī mentioned a monastery named ʿUmr Kaskar, which he located "below al-Wāsiṭ, on the eastern side of it," where the Christian bishop resided.[108] Two centuries later, the famous geographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī knew Kaskar as an agricultural region.[109] And the fact that al-Wāsiṭ was reported to occupy both sides of the Tigris River indicates that Kaskar did not in fact decline, but was rather incorporated into al-Wāsiṭ and lost its separate identity.[110] The Sasanian city did not in fact go away, but continued under its Islamic name. We cannot say what proportion of former Kaskar, renamed "eastern al-Wāsiṭ," was Muslim or not at any given period, but the data reviewed above indicate that the literary amnesia outstripped the social Islamization "on the ground" throughout Iraq. Non-Muslims were not gone, even if their places were renamed.

The persistence of monasteries and dioceses of the Church of the East, reliant as they are on the donations of the faithful, suggest that this particular Christian denomination did not experience any substantive

Islamization before the end of the first millennium, with perhaps only the first hints of coming changes in the south of Iraq around Basra. Yet Eastern Syriac Christianity and Islam were not the only religions in late antique and early Islamic Iraq; does the persistence of the former tell us anything about the progress of Islamization more generally? One might surmise that other religious groups fueled the conversion to Iraq at the rate proposed by Bulliet, so that Iraq might be presumed to be 90 percent Muslim before 390/1000.[111] Beyond the Church of the East, there were at least two other Christian groups in Iraq, the Syriac Orthodox (so-called "Jacobites") and the Chalcedonian Orthodox (so-called "Melkites"). In addition, significant Jewish populations continued in Iraq, as well as the formerly state-sponsored Zoroastrians and new religions such as Manichaeans and Mandaeans.[112] In the absence of census records, the relative proportion of these groups is unknowable, but there are hints. The depth of hierarchy of the Church of the East in Iraq far exceeded that of the other Christian denominations, indicating, if not the precise proportion of populations, at least which ecclesiastical structure was best at securing a share of agricultural produce.[113] We might expect a certain amount of slippage among Christian denominations, but it is hard to imagine that the vast majority of Christians in Iraq did not worship with priests appointed by the Church of the East hierarchy based in Baghdad, rather than the more distant hierarchies of the Western Syriac denominations. Thus the lack of mass conversion to Islam among the Church of the East is suggestive for Iraqi Christianity more broadly.

Comparing the Christian and Jewish populations in early Islamic Iraq is not easy. Scholars have previously emphasized the urbanization of the Jewish population, but Philip Ackerman-Lieberman has recently argued that most of the region's Jews continued in agricultural pursuits until Iraq's economic crisis in the fourth/tenth century.[114] The Jewish exilarchate and Iraq's two geonic academies (*yeshîvôt*) of Sura and Pumbedita likewise continued, though not uninterruptedly, into the fifth/eleventh century, revealing an institutional continuity similar to that experienced by the Church of the East.[115] The economic basis of these institutions was perhaps mainly local Jewish populations rather than

donations from abroad, even if the latter generated more literature and thus more modern scholarly discussion.[116] Robert Brody remarks that, while the number of Jews who did convert is unknowable, such conversions did not seriously impinge upon the Iraqi Jewish communities' "integrity."[117] If few Jews or Christians converted during the first millennium, then most of the converts to Islam in Iraq during the early Islamic period were not from its fellow Abrahamic religions.

We are even less informed about the relative demographic strength of Zoroastrians as compared to Jews and Christians. The newer religions such as Manichaeism and Mandaeism are not mentioned in Muqaddasī's statement about non-Islamic religions in Iraq,[118] which may indicate that they were less significant for understanding the region broadly.[119] But Zoroastrianism had been the state-supported religion of the Sasanian dynasty, so it may have claimed a large number of followers in the region around the former imperial capital in southern Iraq. And unlike Judaism and Christianity, the ancient Persian religion did suffer significant institutional rupture in the early Islamic period. We might therefore expect Islamization in Iraq to be driven by the conversion of Zoroastrians, even if some of them chose Christianity over its newer monotheistic cousin.[120] Nevertheless, Muqaddasī could still, in the Buyid period in the late fourth/tenth century, claim that Iraq had "many Magians," so it is unclear even how many of them had adopted Islam by the end of the first millennium.

This recapitulation of Iraq's religious diversity might suggest that most converts to Islam came neither from Christianity nor Judaism, but we do not know if at the time of the Arab conquests, those two monotheistic religions together accounted for ten percent of the region's population, ninety percent, or anywhere in between. Yet if Christians and Jews both preserved their "communal integrity," and if there were still "many Magians" in Iraq in the fourth/late-tenth century, it is unclear from which sources a 90 percent Muslim supermajority, as scholars presume for Iraq by the year 390/1000, might have been drawn. Indeed, regardless of the relative proportions among different non-Muslim populations, Muqaddasī's testimony that mosques were only beginning to

penetrate Iraq's many agricultural villages in the fourth/tenth century suggests that the religion of the rulers was also almost exclusively an urban religion. The urban character of Islam before 390/1000, combined with the general economic principle that the populations of agrarian societies are overwhelmingly rural, calls into question whether Islamization had even reached a third of Iraq's population, much less a majority. Bulliet's proposed conversion curve must be considerably too steep.

Islam's weak penetration into the Iraqi countryside even by the fourth/tenth century should change how we understand the shape of early Islamic history in Iraq, in precisely the period when Iraq ruled the Muslim world. If, indeed, there were very few Muslims in Iraq's smaller towns and villages, then, in fact, the third/ninth century was no tipping point, no "age of conversions," but rather a period when most people kept on keeping on. Scholars can stop interpreting elite texts in the context of a popular wave of conversions which mostly likely had not yet happened; religious diversity was much more continuous from the late Sasanian period into the rule of the Buyid dynasty four centuries later. Non-Muslims were pervasive in Iraq throughout the period of Abbasid power, and Muslim texts might be more thoroughly contextualized by an awareness of the religious other, even when unmentioned. Muqaddasī's list of town mosques suggests that rural Islamization, and therefore demographic Islamization, was beginning rather than ending as the Buyid *amīr*s captured Baghdad. Indeed, David Wilmshurst has demonstrated that the period of rapid transformation for Iraqi dioceses is later, around 1200 in southern Iraq, and after 1300 in the north.[121] If we are looking for an "age of conversions" in Iraq, we should perhaps look to the eve of the Mongol conquest rather than to the Samarran period of the Abbasid Caliphate.

Notes

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1. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1866), 275–277, 290, 346–347; idem, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, trans. Philip K. Ḥitti and Francis C. Murgotten (2 vols.; New York: Columbia University, 1916-1924), 1.434–437, 449–450; 2.60–61.

2. C. Edmund Bosworth (ed.), *Historic Cities of the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 550–551. The course of the Tigris has subsequently shifted so that the ruins of al-Wāsiṭ are no longer along the river.

3. Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus novus: répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Stuttgart: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1993), 102–103.

4. Abū'l-Qāsim Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Naṣībī Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1964), 214; idem, *Configuration de la terre (Kitab surat al-ard)*, trans. Johannes Hendrik Kramer and Gaston Wiet (2 vols.; Beirut: Commission Internationale pour la Traduction des Chefs-d'Oeuvre, 1964), 1.231; Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsān al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *Descriptio Imperii Moslemici*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (2nd ed.; Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum 3; Leiden: Brill, 1906), 118; idem, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions: a Translation of Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fi maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, trans. Basil Anthony Collins (Reading, UK: Centre for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, 1994), 99.

5. Demographic Islamization, i.e., the process by which a region's population comes to identify as Muslim, is only one variety of Islamization among others, such as the Islamization of government, coinage, or culture. See Andrew C. S. Peacock, "Introduction," in Andrew C. S. Peacock (ed.), *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 1–18; Thomas A. Carlson, "When Did the Middle East Become Muslim? Trends in the Study of Islam's 'Age of Conversions,'" *History Compass* 16 (2018) (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/

doi/abs/10.1111/hic3.12494).

6. Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 82. Alwyn Harrison suggested, and Richard Bulliet later affirmed, that his proposed percentages are not of the total population, but only "of the ultimate unquantifiable total of converts": Harrison, "Behind the Curve: Bulliet and Conversion to Islam in al-Andalus Revisited," *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 24 (2012): 35–51, 37–38; Richard W. Bulliet, "The Conversion Curve Revisited," in Peacock (ed.), *Islamisation*, 69–79, 71. It is difficult to see how changing percentages of unquantifiable phenomena could be mathematically or historically meaningful, but in any event, given that Iraq today is 95 percent Muslim or more, the practical difference between the two interpretations seems negligible.

7. Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 522. He also cites earlier scholarship by Dennett and (for Egypt) Lapidus indicating that the decline in poll-tax receipts during the Umayyad period was not evidence for mass conversion: ibid., 119. On the use of these terms, see below.

8. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam*, 36–37; Richard W. Bulliet, "Conversion Stories in Early Islam," in Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (eds.), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 123–133, 128–132; Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 273, 524.

9. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 381–382.

10. Ibid., 212, 305, 354, 361.

11. Bulliet remarked the extreme paucity of Islamic conversion stories from the first three centuries; "Conversion Stories," 123.

12. Wadi Haddad, "Continuity and Change in Religious Adherence: Ninth-Century Baghdad," in Gervers and Bikhazi (eds.), *Conversion and Continuity*, 33–53.

13. Giovanna Calasso, "Récits de conversions, zèle dévotionnel et instruction religieuse dans les biographies des 'gens de Baṣra' du Kitāb

al-Ṭabaqāt d'Ibn Sa'd," in Mercedes García-Arenal (ed.), *Conversions islamiques: identités religieuses en islam méditerranéen* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larosse, 2001), 19–47.

14. Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

15. David Bertaina, *Christian and Muslim Dialogues: The Religious Uses of a Literary Form in the Early Islamic Middle East* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011).

16. Haddad, "Continuity and Change," 50; Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 20, 35, 56–57, 99; Bertaina, *Christian and Muslim Dialogues*, 106–108, 238. The phrase is Haddad's. Oddly, Griffith seems to assert a slower timeline of conversion than Bulliet on the basis of Bulliet's 1979 book, suggesting Muslims were not even a majority in Iraq into the fifth/eleventh century; *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 11. He gives no evidence or argument apart from Bulliet for the view. Gerrit Reinink argues that fear of mass conversions drove the Christian clergy to develop anti-Islamic literature already from the end of the first/seventh century, a fear which was increasingly justified by social developments; "Following the Doctrine of the Demons: Early Christian Fear of Conversion to Islam," in Jan N. Bremmer, Wout Jac van Bekkum, and Arie L. Molendijk (eds.), *Cultures of Conversion* (Groningen Studies in Cultural Change 18; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 127–138.

17. Michael Philip Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 167–179, esp. 168.

18. Richard W. Bulliet, "Conversion-Based Patronage and Onomastic Evidence in Early Islam," in John Nawas and Monique Bernards (eds.), *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 246–262, 251–252.

19. Ibid., 261.

20. Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–2.

21. Compare the approaches of Thomas A. Carlson, "Contours of Conversion: The Geography of Islamization in Syria, 600–1500," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135 (2015): 791–816, 796–797 and Antrim, *Routes and Realms*, 3.

22. Tamer el-Leithy points out that medieval Muslim authors did not attach political significance to relative demography, and therefore did not record it; "Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293–1524 A.D." (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2005), 27, especially n. 71.

23. Jack B. V. Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2010), 430–480; Uriel Simonsohn, "Conversion to Islam: A Case Study for the Use of Legal Sources: Conversion to Islam," *History Compass* 11 (2013): 647–662; idem, "'Halting Between Two Opinions': Conversion and Apostasy in Early Islam," *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013): 342–370; Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 142–182.

24. For a scholarly rejection of the polemical label "Nestorian," see Sebastian P. Brock, "The 'Nestorian' Church: A Lamentable Misnomer," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 78 (1996): 23–35.

25. Ibn Ḥawqal placed the boundary between Iraq and al-Jazīrah at Takrit, whereas Balādhurī and Muqaddasī included in Iraq the smaller city of al-Sinn, which is almost fifty miles further north at the junction of the Tigris and the Lower Zāb: Balādhurī, Futūḥ, 265; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.422; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 208; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.225; Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 115; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 97. The fact that al-Sinn is depicted on Ibn Ḥawqal's map of Iraq does not imply that he agreed with the others, since Mosul is also depicted there, while he describes both al-Sinn and Takrit under the section on al-Jazīrah: Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 203, 205, 210; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.219, 223, 226. On the other hand, Muqaddasī included not only Anbar in Iraq but also Hīt, fifty miles northwest up the Euphrates from Anbar, while Balādhurī assigned Hīt to al-Jazīrah and Anbar to Iraq, and Ibn Ḥawqal assigned both Hīt and Anbar to al-Jazīrah: Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 179; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.279; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 205; idem, *Configuration*, trans.

Kramer and Wiet, 1.222; Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 115; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 97.

26. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 134–136.

27. Carlson, "Contours of Conversion."

28. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 275–292, 294–298; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.434–452, 457–461.

29. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 346–350; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 2.60–66.

30. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 332; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 2.32–33. The rapid development of Mosul by the Marwanids was proposed by Chase F. Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 72–89.

31. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 431.

32. Carlson, "Contours of Conversion," 798–799.

33. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 275; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.434.

34. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 179, 289–290, 333; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.279, 449; 2.34. Morony mentions these mosques as the ear-liest in Iraq; *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 432–433.

35. Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The Empire in Transition: The Caliphates of Sulaymān, ʿUmar, and Yazīd, A.D. 715–724/A.H. 97–105*, trans. David Stephan Powers (History of al-Ṭabarī 24; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 165.

36. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 215; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.232. Morony cites evidence that the shift was not immediate, however; as late as the third/ninth century, al-Ḥīrah was still Christian and still larger than Ḥulwan; *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 234. Al-Ḥīrah had a Christian bishop from the pre-Islamic period into the fifth/eleventh century, who may be presumed to have shifted his residence to Kufa at some undetermined point; see Jean Baptiste Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon Orientale ou Recueil de Synodes Nestoriens* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902), 36; Giuseppe Simone Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana* (3 vols. in 4; Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide,

1725), 2.458; Buṭrus Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar al-akhbār al-bīʿiyyah: wa-huwa al-qism al-mafqūd min "al-Tārīkh al-Siʿirdī" (?)* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Dīwān, 2000), 123.

37. Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon*, 33; Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 2.458; Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 125. The fourth/tenth-century historian ʿAmr b. Mattā reports a catholicos going to Basra in the 750s "because its metropolitan had died": Henricus Gismondi, *Maris Amris et Slibae de Patriarchio Nestorianorum Commentario* (2 vols.; Rome: C. de Luigi, 1896), 1.67. For the location of Pĕrāth dĕ-Mayshān, see A. Hausleiter, M. Roaf, St. J. Simpson, R. Wenke (creators), Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilizations/Harvard University, R. Talbert, P. Flensted Jensen, Jeffrey Becker, Sean Gillies, and Tom Elliott (contributors), "Maghlub/Forat?/Perat de Meshan?/Bahman Ardashir?/'Oratha'?/Furat al-Baṣra?: A Pleiades Place Resource," *Pleiades: A Gazetteer of Past Places*, 2015 (https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/912899), and the bibliography cited there.

38. See notes 2 and 4 above.

39. Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 63–72.

40. Monastery of Mar Pethyon in Baghdad: Gismondi, *De Patriarchio Nestorianorum Commentario*, 1.71.

41. Ibid., 1.79.

42. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 205; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.223.

43. Hugh Kennedy, "The Feeding of the Five Hundred Thousand: Cities and Agriculture in Early Islamic Mesopotamia," *Iraq* 73 (2011): 177–199, 177.

44. J. C. Russell, "Late Ancient and Medieval Population," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 48:3 (1958): 1–152, 89, 90. Russell was followed by Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam*, 80–81.

45. Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, *Atlas of World Population History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 150–151.

46. This report is given by Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 270; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.428. For a discussion of the practice, including the interpretation of this passage, see Chase F. Robinson, "Neck-Sealing in Early Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48

(2005): 401–441, esp. 414. Presumably reflecting a similar tradition, the round number of five hundred thousand is given, without *isnād*, by Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 211; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.227; Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 133; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 111. Oddly, Muqaddasī specifies this number is "from the foreigners" (*min al-jawwālah*), but one might suspect this of a textual corruption from Ibn Ḥawqal's phrase "people to the *jizyah*" (*insān li'l-jizyah*).

47. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 175; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 269; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.427.

48. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 272; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.430.

49. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 266; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.423.

50. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 273–274, 351–353, 359–361, 363–367, 369; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.431–432; 2.69–71, 81–82, 84–85, 88–91, 93–94, 96, 99–100.

51. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 180, 368; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.281; 2.94.

52. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 272–273; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.430–431. Dayr Yazīd ("Yazīd's monastery") is likewise mentioned, although with variant names, in two parallel reports included in Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1979), 57. It is not mentioned in any other work I have consulted, so its location and its role in these reports remain elusive.

53. Balādhurī, Futūḥ, 265; idem, Origins, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.421–422. He later mentioned a *dihqān* of Maysān who "apostatized and turned away from Islam" in the caliphate of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, which suggests that he had earlier adopted Islam: Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 343; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 2.56. Morony cites examples from other sources, and infers that conversion to Islam was general among the first-/seventh-century *dahāqīn*; *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 205.

54. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 180; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.281. The comment specifies that these converts, unlike the *dahāqīn* of the south, were Arabs.

55. For example, Balādhurī reported disputed views about the status of al-Sawād: Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 266–268; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.423–426. In the third/late-ninth century, as effective caliphal power waned and the provinces became more autonomous, the tax revenue from Iraq likely played an increasing role in the caliph's bureaucracy. Iraq's tax rates and revenues appear prominently in Balādhurī's discussion of the region; *Futūḥ*, 268–272, 368; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.426–430; 2.94.

56. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 232.

57. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 180; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.281. The prominence of Muslim nomads around Mosul is shown by their taking over the rural tax-collection around 180s/800 (Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 96–97).

58. Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 93, 169.

59. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 196; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.211.

60. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 293, 351–352, 371–372; idem, *Origins*, trans. Ḥitti and Murgotten, 1.454; 2.69, 99–100.

61. Richard M. Eaton, "Shrines, Cultivators, and Muslim 'Conversion' in Punjab and Bengal, 1300-1700," *Medieval History Journal* 12 (2009): 191–220, 198–208.

62. Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 41; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 38.

63. Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 114–115; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 95, 97. A village of the same name, evidently closer to al-Madāʾin and Baghdad, is mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 219; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.238.

64. Apart from six district capitals, thirteen town mosques are mentioned, whereas his initial listing of towns included eighty-three towns, of which he described twenty-eight more particularly. He also described a few towns which did not make his initial list, such as al-Ṣalīq and Ṣarṣar: Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 119, 121; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 99, 101.

65. Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 130; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 109. For discussions of shrines in Syria shared among Muslims, Christians, and Jews, see Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval*

Syria (Oxford University Press, 2002), 195–201, 210–212, 243–250; Carlson, "Contours of Conversion," 800–802.

66. Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 130; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 109. Ibn Ḥawqal also knew of the tomb of ʿAbd Allāh b. Mubarak at Hīt on the Euphrates; *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 205; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.222.

67. Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 130; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 109.

68. Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 126. Possibly "its pact" (*dhimmatuhu*) refers to people by metonymy. The translation is adjusted from that of Muqaddasī, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 105. A textual variant reported by de Goeje would say that most of its dhimmi population was Jewish and Christian (i.e., more than Zoroastrians).

69. This is even more significant given that Muqaddasī had complained about his native Jerusalem that Jews and Christians outnumbered Muslims there; *Descriptio*, 167; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 141. For him to think Iraq had a noteworthy presence of both these religions, alongside the more distinctive Zoroastrians, is telling.

70. For the use of "monastery books" as evidence for Christian-Muslim relations, see Hilary Kilpatrick, "Representations of Social Intercourse between Muslims and non-Muslims in some Medieval *Adab* Works," in Jacques Waardenburg (ed.), *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 213–224; eadem, "Monasteries Through Muslim Eyes: The *Diyārāt* Books," in David Thomas (ed.), *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 19–37; Thomas Sizgorich, "The Dancing Martyr: Violence, Identity, and the Abbasid Postcolonial," *History of Religions* 57 (2017): 2–27.

71. Kilpatrick, "Representations," 217. Kilpatrick cites ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Shābūshtī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, ed. Kūrkīs ʿAwwād (2nd ed.; Baghdād: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1966), 26*, 309.

72. Shābūshtī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, 3–190, 228–240, 244–283, 300–303, 305–308.

73. A century earlier than Shābushtī, the Christian author Īshōʿdnaḥ of Basra composed a biographical dictionary of monastic founders of the Sasanian and early Islamic periods; see Sebastian P. Brock, "Ishoʿdnaḥ,"

in Sebastian P. Brock, Aaron M. Butts, George A. Kiraz, and Lucas Van Rompay (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2011), s.v. The biographies are somewhat muddled chronologically, but at least one explicitly indicates a post-Sasanian foundation of several monasteries by Gabriel of Kashkar (d. 121/739): Jean Baptiste Chabot, "Livre de la Chasteté, composé par Jesusdenah, Évêque de al-Baṣra," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 16 (1896): 62, 276. It is also remarkable that Īshōʿdnaḥ, in the middle of the third/ninth century, did not feel the need to mention any Muslims in his text except al-Mutawakkil (once), the "kingdom of the sons of Hāshim," and a child slave converted by his successive owners from Zoroastrianism to Islam to Christianity in the second/eighth century: ibid., 30, 64–65, 66, 250, 278, 279.

74. Churches would provide a closer analogy to mosques, of course, but there might well be significant divergences even between the number of people who attend a particular church or a particular mosque. In any case, the evidence for a comparison between churches and mosques is lacking, since no early medieval text of which I am aware lists church buildings in Iraq.

75. Īshōʿdnaḥ's work also included references to two ruined monasteries (out of over a hundred): Chabot, "Livre de la Chasteté," 29, 62, 250, 276.

76. For example, Shābūshtī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, 79.

77. The fact that the lists are independent of each other is suggested by the fact that they do not overlap in terminology for bishoprics or metropolitanates, and even when they contain the same places, they often refer to them by different names and in different orders. There is no basis for concluding any textual interrelationship.

78. The 410 Syriac list was published with French translation in Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon*, 33–34, 272–273. Ilyās b. ʿUbayd al-Dimashqī's Arabic list was published with Latin translation in Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 2:458–459. The anonymous Arabic list of the fifth/early-eleventh century was published in Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 122–130. For

more information on the Mukhtaṣar, see Herman Teule, "L'abrégé de la chronique ecclésiastique (*Muḫtaṣār* [sic] *al-aḫbār al-bīʿiyya*) et la chronique de Séert. Quelques sondages," in Muriel Debié (ed.), *Historiographie syriaque* (Paris: Geuthner, 2009), 161–177; Philip Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 70–71.

79. Sometimes a bishopric was created even where there were few local Christians of the relevant denomination, for symbolic reasons (as in Jerusalem) or political access (such as the new Eastern Syriac bishop of Damascus); see Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*, 72.

80. His reasoning appeals to the general potential for such lists to be out-of-date, the lack of historians' references to bishops, and the inference that "it is doubtful whether there were many Christians left after two and a half centuries of Muslim rule"; David Wilmshurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East & West, 2011), 161, 163. This last intuition, however, is precisely the question under investigation in this article, and therefore cannot be considered evidence in favor of Wilmshurst's conclusion. His former two reasons are likewise questionable, as discussed below.

81. The most accessible digest of this information is given by Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*. Regrettably, that volume did not include footnotes for individual bishops but only general references for each diocese. In most cases, precise references can be found in J. M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne, contribution á l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq* (Recherches publiées sous la direction de l'Institut de lettres orientales de Beyrouth 22–23, 42; Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965–1968).

82. Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 129. Fiey dates the note to the last scribe of the manuscript, writing in 1137, presumably because he thought he had identified a metropolitan of Armenia between 1075 and 1080: Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*, 59. But there was no catholicos named Yuḥannā between 1075 and 1137, the latest being Yuḥannā VII (r. 442–449/1050–1057).

83. Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 123.

84. Gismondi, *De Patriarchio Nestorianorum Commentario*, 1.104. Wilmshurst erroneously reversed the direction of the transfer, and on the basis of his misunderstanding he condemned Ilyās b. ʿUbayd's accuracy; *Martyred*, 163, 217. Wilmshurst's discussion of ʿAmr b. Mattā's history also relies upon an older and erroneous view of its authorship, which had been exposed by Bo Holmberg, "A Reconsideration of the Kitāb Al-Mağdal," *Parole de l'Orient* 18 (1993): 255–273.

85. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 2.458. The editor transcribed the place-name al-Bawāzīkh instead of al-Bawāzīj.

86. Ibid.

87. Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 123; Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*, 62.

88. Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon*, 33–34.

89. Ibid., 34. The last four names in the list are not mentioned in Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*.

90. Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*, 86–87, 115–116.

91. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 2.458. See also Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*, 78–79.

92. Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 125.

93. Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon*, 33. The last is alternately spelled Radaḥ on the following page.

94. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 2.458. The editor mis-transcribed Shahrqart as Shahrqadt.

95. Gismondi, *De Patriarchio Nestorianorum Commentario*, 1.70.

96. Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 125. The fact that Daqūqā was listed separately by both Ilyās and the *Mukhtaṣar* questions Fiey's assertion that Daqūqā was the residence of the metropolitan of Beth Garmay from ca. 280s/900 onward: Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*, 72.

97. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 2.458.

98. Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 123. The diocese of ʿAbdāsī is perhaps to be identified with the otherwise unknown diocese of al-Qubbah, which the *Mukhtaṣar* notes had recently been merged with the diocese of Kashkar. Fiey provides no identification for al-Qubbah, but suggests that ʿAbdāsī was the continuation of the former diocese of Nahargūr in the

metropolitanate of Basra further south: Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*, 43, 114.

99. Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon*, 33.

100. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 2.458. Assemani misread Dastumaysān as Dastihsan. The identifications are those of Fiey, who suggested that Nahargūr was renamed ʿAbdasī and attached to the province of the catholicos: Fiey, *Oriens Christianus novus*, 43, 100, 114, 125–126. Even if Fiey's identification of Nahargūr with ʿAbdasī is correct, as we have seen, it disappeared before 390/1000.

101. Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, 125.

102. Older scholarship has made far too much hay out of a theoretical canonical permission for Eastern Syriac bishops to marry. See, for example, Peter Bruns, "Barsauma von Nisibis und die Aufhebung der Klerikerenthaltsamkeit im Gefolge der Synode von Beth-Lapat (484)," *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 37 (2005): 1–43. In fact, in the medieval millennium, no bishops seem to have done so.

103. Cynthia Jan Villagomez, "The Fields, Flocks, and Finances of Monks: Economic Life at Nestorian Monasteries, 500–850" (Ph.D. diss., University of California-Los Angeles, 1998), 63. Many monks did continue to labor for the economic benefit of their monastery, of course: ibid., 68 n. 1, 120, 131–132, 143.

104. Villagomez, "Fields, Flocks, and Finances," 9, 60–61, 65, 121, 131, 138–139, 141–142, 177–178, 183, 185. While endowments of land might suggest self-sufficiency, there was always the concern that monastic estates could be expropriated, sometimes even by other Christians: ibid., 39–40, 119 n. 6, 127.

105. Villagomez noted that Hārūn al-Rashīd and his wife Zubaydah both donated money to Christian bishops: Villagomez, "Fields, Flocks, and Finances," 121. Other Muslims' donations to monasteries are noted at ibid., 144.

106. Hugh Kennedy, "The Feeding of the Five Hundred Thousand: Cities and Agriculture in Early Islamic Mesopotamia," *Iraq* 73 (2011): 177–199, 197–198.

107. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 524.

108. Shābūshtī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, 274. Shābūshtī's reference to this official as a metropolitan archbishop (*muṭrān*) is erroneous.

109. Yāqūt b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch aus den Handschriften zu Berlin, St. Petersburg und Paris auf Kosten der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (6 vols.; Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1866-1873), 4:274–275.

110. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 214; idem, *Configuration*, trans. Kramer and Wiet, 1.231; Muqaddasī, *Descriptio*, 118; idem, *Regions*, trans. Collins, 99.

111. See n. 6 above.

112. On the Mandaeans of Iraq, see now Kevin van Bladel, *From Sasanian Mandaeans to Ṣābians of the Marshes* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

113. The Buyid-era *Mukhtaṣar* lists thirty-three dioceses of the Church of the East in Iraq; Ḥaddād (ed.), Mukhtaṣar, 122–125. By contrast, Fiey identifies no more than nineteen Iraqi dioceses of the Syriac Orthodox at any time during the first four centuries of Islam, and some of those overlap or perhaps represent shifting episcopal headquarters; *Oriens Christianus Novus*, 164–267. The "Melkites" in Iraq were primarily captives and their descendants, and never seem to have attained large numbers.

114. Philip I. Ackerman-Lieberman, "Revisiting Jewish Occupational Choice and Urbanization in Iraq under the Early Abbasids," *Jewish History* 29 (2015): 113–135.

115. For the history of the geonic *yeshîvôt*, see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (2nd ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 11–18, 35–53.

116. Brody, *Geonim*, 123–126. Marina Rustow questions the assumptions by Brody and other scholars that each institution's *reshût*, understood to be the territory over which a *yeshîvah* exercised jurisdiction and levied taxes, was fixed and stable: Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 84. Rustow's critique raises questions about the stability of each *yeshīvah*'s fiscal systems, but we might still expect the large Jewish population of Mesopotamia to have provided the majority of each institution's support.

117. Brody, *Geonim*, xxv.

118. See n. 69 above.

119. Van Bladel also notes that Mandaeism's emphasis on endogamy and purity has restricted their numbers; *Mandaeans*, 117.

120. See n. 10 above.

121. David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318–1913* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 582, Subsidia 104; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 342–345.

Al-Ḥīrah, the Naṣrids, and Their Legacy: New Perspectives on Late Antique Iranian History

Isabel Toral-Niehoff and Jesús Lorenzo Jiménez

Abstract

This paper argues that the famous conqueror of al-Andalus, Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, who originally came from ʿAyn al-Tamr, a town under the hegemony of Naṣrid al-Ḥīrah, transmitted aspects of Sasanian administrative practice to al-Andalus and hence to Europe, as evidenced by the taxation terms *tasca* and *kafiz* attested in Latin and Romance texts. This specific argument is embedded in a larger argument about cultural hybridity centering on the city of al-Ḥīrah as a pre-Islamic and Islamic contact zone among cultures—Roman, Iranian, Arab; Christian, Muslim; tribal and urban. It thus links the processes of transculturation observable in al-Ḥīrah with developments in the far edges of the Islamic world through the person of the conqueror Mūsā b. Nuṣayr.

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Introduction

Over the last decades, Late Antiquity has been increasingly apprehended as a temporal category having its own significance, defined by the binding elements of empire and monotheism, and less as a period interpreted under the sign of antique decadence, as it was before.[1] This reconceptualization has caused its timeline to be gradually extended right into the third/ninth and even the fourth/tenth century, leading to the inclusion of the Umayyad and (partially) the Abbasid Caliphate, to now be interpreted as forms of late antique monotheistic empire.[2] Furthermore, the geographical focus has shifted towards including the areas located at the eastern and southern peripheries of the Roman Empire, whose peoples regularly interacted with Greco-Roman culture and participated in the gradual conversion to monotheistic religions. Against this background—especially given that the Sasanian Empire was not only the main rival and competitor of Rome, but also in continuous contact with it as its most powerful neighbor—it does not come as a surprise that the late antique period in Iran is receiving increasing scholarly attention.[3]

In this context, it is crucial to investigate liminal contact zones between both empires that acted as spaces of cultural contact, exchange, and cross-pollination, thus spreading late antique models beyond the Roman frontiers and simultaneously functioning as focal points of "Iranization." The following study concentrates on one of these hotspots, namely the Naṣrid principality in Iraq, an Arab petty state around the city of al-Ḥīrah in southern Iraq, whose dominion reached as far as al-Anbār, Dūmat al-Jandal and ʿAyn al-Tamr, and which played a crucial role in functioning as a transitional and translational zone between Iran, Arabia, and Rome.[4] The purpose of this article is to provide a survey on the current state of research about al-Ḥīrah, as well as to sketch recent discoveries and innovative approaches in this critical subfield of late antique Iranian history.

Al-Ḥīrah and the Naṣrids in the east: New discoveries and innovative approaches

Considering the above-mentioned shifts in the study of Late Antiquity, as well as the relevance of al-Ḥīrah for the investigation of late antique Iran, it might come as a surprise that its investigation has only gained momentum in the last few years.[5] Here we may rely on a monograph by one of the authors of this article published in 2014,[6] as well as on several recent articles,[7] in addition to diverse novel studies that discuss topics relevant to the broader historical context.[8] This state of affairs is in contrast to the many studies published over previous decades on the Jafnid petty kingdom, the most obvious parallel of the Naṣrids, a tribal state that played a very similar role at the fringes of the Roman Empire in Greater Syria in the same period.[9] The imbalance is partly due to the difficulties in the source material. In the case of the Jafnids, archaeological, numismatic, and epigraphic evidence abounds and has been investigated broadly by Roman archaeologists and ancient historians.[10] Furthermore, as allies of the Romans, the Jafnids have a significant presence in contemporaneous Greek and Roman historiography. The material remains of the Naṣrids of al-Ḥīrah, in contrast, have much less frequently been investigated, and have suffered from the general shortcomings of late antique archaeology in Mesopotamia.[11] In addition, as Persian allies, the Naṣrids rarely appear in Greek, Roman, and Syriac sources, and since Sasanian historiography is mostly lost, we must rely on later Arabic reports from Islamic times.

Concerning the archaeology of al-Ḥīrah, the situation has indeed been complicated for a long time, but will hopefully improve soon. Until recently, we have had to rely on the sketchy results from a preliminary excavation undertaken in the 1930s[12] and a brief campaign in 1946,[13] complemented by those of a German survey of the area in the 1970s[14] and that of a Japanese excavation in the 1980s in the nearby site of Ain Shai'a.[15] The ruins of al-Ḥīrah, located in the outskirts of modern, rapidly growing Kufa and Najaf, have almost disappeared and partly been overbuilt, and the long-lasting military conflicts in the zone have impeded

any continuous archaeological research for a long time. However, the current calming of the situation in southern Iraq may provide opportunity to investigate the zone anew: there is an ongoing German-Iraqi archaeological survey that has been taking place since 2015 that pursues an integrated approach, focusing on questions of settlement and urban development, and which promises to yield very significant new insights soon. It has already brought to light interesting minor findings such as pottery, fragments of glass vessels, stucco plaques with incised and colored crosses, and copper coins.[16] It is to be said that al-Ḥīrah has an advantage in that the site has not been disturbed by building activities until recently, so that, despite the difficulties already mentioned, we may expect exciting new insights.

In terms of the written record, the study of al-Ḥīrah must draw mainly on the rich Arabic tradition of historiography, which has the disadvantage of having been composed centuries later during Islamic times, and so requires critical assessment based on a good knowledge of the peculiarities of the Arabic textual tradition.[17] However, the strand in this tradition relevant to al-Ḥīrah is most probably based on local Ḥīran traditions collected in nearby Kufa such as local chronicles, informants, and dynastic lists,[18] which permits one to grasp the insider's perspective, in contrast to the case of the Jafnids, whose traditions are much less attested in Arabic sources.[19] In this regard we may also expect new insights, as is shown by recent discoveries. From the 1980s, we have the publication of the *Manāqib al-mazyadiyyah* of Abū'l-Baqāʾ,[20] a very valuable source of the fifth/eleventh century, that was already used in manuscript by M. J. Kister in the 1960s,[21] and contains numerous passages not preserved in the usual well-known sources used by Rothstein.[22] Furthermore, the recent discovery of the so-called "Haddad Chronicle,"[23] which has been identified as a missing portion of the *Chronicle of Seert*, permits us to increase our knowledge of the early history of al-Ḥīrah, for example, by shedding light on its early tribal composition.[24]

Beyond the discovery of new evidence, the application of new interpretative frameworks on the already known material is opening fresh perspectives on al-Ḥīrah and its legacies. For example, Greg Fisher

has taken concepts from anthropology and analyzed the Arabs in the *limes* or boundary zone from the point of view of state-tribe interaction, highlighting aspects of tribal leadership in peripheral polities at the Roman frontier.[25]

Another approach that promises to be fruitful is to look at al-Ḥīrah as an example of a borderland area and as a cultural translation zone, both in the pre-Islamic and in the Islamic period, as is illustrated by the following.

The petty state of al-Ḥīrah can be interpreted as an Iranian frontier state that parallels the multifaceted nature of Roman frontier states like the *foederati* in North Africa and Germania. This is, first of all, the consequence of its geographic location at the banks of the Middle Euphrates. On the one hand, its proximity to Ctesiphon, the Sasanian capital—located 100 kilometers to the northeast—inserted al-Ḥīrah into the Persian sphere of influence and ended up transforming the petty-kings of al-Ḥīrah from allies into dependent "vassals" of the Sasanian King of Kings; on the other hand, its location at the western frontier of the Sasanian Empire, looking westwards to the Syrian desert and ultimately to the Roman Empire, as well as southwards to the Arabian Peninsula, determined its key strategic function for the Sasanians as buffer state.

As a consequence, the Naṣrids were commissioned by the Persians first to wage proxy wars against the allies of the Romans, the Jafnids, with the aim to keep the conflict between both empires on a manageable level, and second, to serve the Persians as both a protective shield against the Arab tribes from the peninsula and also as useful mediators with aggressive Bedouin.[26] In addition, al-Ḥīrah became a neutral zone populated by very diverse religious communities that suffered persecution elsewhere, like Monophysite monks and Manichaeans, tolerated by the pagan dynasty of the city that sought to maintain room to maneuver in a period when political considerations, especially negotiating alliances, had come to be inflected by questions of religious identity.

In cultural terms, this condition as frontier state meant that al-Ḥīrah occupied an in-between space, typical for borderland areas, characterized by a high degree of diverse cultural, linguistic, and societal

hybridity. The population was composed of various communities bearing a broad and often overlapping spectrum of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious features: tribal and urban Arabs, Persian noblemen and soldiers, Syriac Christians, pagan Aramaeans, Manichaean, and Jewish communities. A telling example is the polyglot *ʿibād*, the local Christian Arab community, whose members can be characterized as multilingual transcultural agents and brokers.[27] Cultural innovations associated with Late Antiquity such as literacy, monotheistic notions of spiritual salvation and political power, and biblical narratives and religious organization all reached the Arabian Peninsula principally via transmitters like these *ʿibād*. The cultural hybridity in al-Ḥīrah further parallels its structural diversity: the simultaneous coexistence of tribalism and semi-nomadism with peculiar forms of Arab urbanism and semi-state monarchic structures is attested in this period; we also find highly developed ecclesiastical and monastic structures and building activities.[28] As a hybrid frontier zone, al-Ḥīrah thus became a crucial bridge between the Romans, the Sasanians, and the Arabs—in other words, a space of cultural translation.[29]

The historical importance of the Arab-Iranian matrix of al-Ḥīrah is further to be seen in its role as long-term mediator and translation zone of late antique models to what became classical Islam. Classical Islam—here understood as the canonized cultural and religious model of the "Golden Age" in Baghdad—was the product of the society of the early Abbasid period, and was shaped in Iraq, namely in Kufa, Basra, and Baghdad. As a consequence of this, we must assume that the Naṣrid legacy in Iraqi al-Ḥīrah was much more important as a late antique substratum for Islam than the Jafnid legacy, simply because of its proximity to the cultural centers of the Abbasid period.

Indeed, the Arabic textual tradition tells us that al-Ḥīrah served as an important historical reference and model, and that it functioned as a site of memory and remembrance, a symbol of the theme of *sic transit Gloria mundi*, and as a frequent topos in literature, in which al-Ḥīrah became the main site associated with pre-Islamic kings, poets, vineyards, monasteries, and luxury, but also with the abhorrent *jāhiliyyah* of pagan kings.[30] The vicinity of al-Ḥīrah with its Islamic successor-heir city Kufa,

one of the birthplaces of the study of Arabic history and antiquities as well as grammar and philology, further explains the prominence of al-Ḥīrah in Arabic historiographical and *adab* narratives, since Ḥīran and Kufan informants were thus able to inscribe and glorify their history as an essential part of the (re)constructed pre-Islamic Arab past.[31]

These early Arabic scholars and philologists, men like the philologist Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, the antiquarian Muḥammad Ibn Ḥabīb, and the family of al-Kalbī, would establish the canon of classical Arabic culture and memory.[32] They managed to establish therein the Ḥīran court of the Naṣrids, of al-Mundhir and al-Nuʿmān, and canonized al-Ḥīrah as the splendorous center of early pre-Islamic poetry, especially of wine-poetry and early panegyrics.[33] Al-Ḥīrah also became the emblematic site where Arab-Iranian cultural contacts had taken place, as reflected in the legends surrounding Bahram Gūr, the Sasanian prince of the fifth century CE who lived as young man among the Arabs of al-Ḥīrah, where he learned Arab ways of hunting, but also introduced such Iranian customs as polo—a veritable cultural hero who embodies the long-lasting history of endemic cultural contact between Arabs and Iranians.[34]

The late antique legacy as mediated through al-Ḥīrah would also affect Islamic history in an indirect way, since the early decades of Islamic history would take place in another geographical setting, namely in the northwestern Arabian Peninsula, in the Ḥijāz. The Arabs dwelling there had never been direct allies of the great powers of the day, but nevertheless they did not fall outside of the late antique world thanks to their contacts with the Naṣrids and the Jafnids.[35] In the sixth century, Yathrib (later Medina) had fallen under the suzerainty of the Naṣrids and thus into the sphere of Sasanian influence.[36] The well-known local hegemony of the Jewish tribes in Medina is probably to be seen in this context, since the Sasanians tended to foster the Jews as a counterbalance to the Christian Arabs allied with Rome.[37] Merchants, probably from al-Ḥīrah, seem to have introduced Manichaeism, probably Christianity, and even the knowledge of Iranian epics into Yathrib/Medina.[38] Poets who frequented the court in al-Ḥīrah spread the news about Arab Christianity and the community of *ʿibād* all over the peninsula, as well as the knowledge that

there were literate, Iranized, and urban Arabs.[39] The Naṣrids also controlled the caravan routes in central Arabia on behalf of the Sasanians. Mecca and the Quraysh, in contrast, remained independent, but had close commercial connections to Syria and to the tribes dwelling there.

The results of this late antique imprint are to be felt in our main source for the origins of Islam, i.e., in the Qurʾān itself. The qurʾānic kerygma not only claims to constitute a continuation of the earlier revealed religions of Late Antiquity, i.e., of Christianity and Judaism. It also reflects the religious language of the contemporary universal religions by combining late antique notions of universal leadership and monotheism with the birth of a new community that surpasses tribal and ethnic boundaries.[40] Furthermore, Muḥammad's idea of prophethood incarnates values associated with the holy man of Late Antiquity (e.g., individual morality, asceticism) that were further amalgamated with ideas of charismatic political authority modeled according to the concept of imperial rule.[41] In addition, the Qurʾān addresses an Arabic-speaking audience that was not only imbued with a mixture of polytheistic creeds and tribal values, but that was also familiar with biblical legends, monotheism, and ideas about scripture.[42] Thus, we can state that the Naṣrids and the Jafnids contributed first to familiarizing the Arabs with late antique cultural and political models and second to shaping the Meccan milieu where the Prophet Muḥammad proclaimed the qurʾānic message.

Al-Ḥīrah in the west: New perspectives on al-Andalus

The importance of al-Ḥīrah and its people as mediators and cultural translators of Late Antique Iran can be seen in unexpected and very distant regions, as will be shown in the following example that further exemplifies the fruitfulness of considering unusual source material such as—in this case—Latin and Romance sources.

The Iranian influence in the Islamic West has often been minimized or reduced to cultural elements, mediated by personalities of Abbasid background like the famous musician Ziryāb or the historians of the al-Rāzī family, who originally hailed from Baghdad and came to al-Andalus

in the third/ninth century introducing the Iranian/Abbasid model of courtly culture into the then-provincial Umayyad court of al-Andalus.[43]

However, as will be shown in the following, the Iranian presence in al-Andalus may be dated already to the arrival of the first Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, and continued for several centuries in spheres linked to political and economic power such as taxation and systems of weights and measures. The bearer of this Iranian influence was none other than Mūsā b. Nuṣayr (d. 97–8/716), the famed conqueror of al-Andalus, who originally came from ʿAyn al-Tamr, a town already mentioned as within the dominion of the Naṣrid king of al-Ḥīrah, and, as we will see, similarly populated by Arab Christians.[44]

Mūsā b. Nuṣayr

In 11/633, the caliph Abū Bakr sent his commander, Khālid b. al-Walīd, to Iraq at the head of an army of Muslims, thus initiating the swift conquest of Mesopotamia. The first city to fall was al-Ḥīrah, which would negotiate its surrender. From there, Khālid moved toward al-Anbār, whose inhabitants also came to terms with the conquerors and capitulated, and then marched with his soldiers in the direction of the nearby ʿAyn al-Tamr. Unlike in previous cities, they confronted there a mixed army of Persians and Arabs loyal to the Sasanians.[45] The Muslims arrived at the gates of the city and, after the resistance of the garrison had vanished, plundered it.

The event was memorialized by numerous informants, whose accounts, all very similar, became part of several compilations.[46] According to the version of events in Ṭabarī, it was Khālid himself who entered the city, where he found forty young men (*ghilmān*), who would be held as hostages, at the moment when they were studying the scriptures inside a church (*kanīsah*). Among them was Nuṣayr, the father of Mūsā. This account raises several questions of interest connected to the origins of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr.

The first question concerns the important presence in ʿAyn al-Tamr in 12/633–4 of Arabs who collaborated with the Persians. As has been

mentioned above, the Arab kingdom of al-Ḥīrah based its existence as a buffer and frontier state on successful collaboration between the Naṣrid monarchs and the Sasanian emperors, but while al-Ḥīrah and al-Anbār had refused to resist the Muslim conquerors and negotiated a peaceful surrender, ʿAyn al-Tamr offered resistance. This indicates either that the Persian presence was particularly strong there, or that the local Arabs felt a special loyalty towards the Sasanian sovereign.

The second issue is the great weight that Christianity seems to have had in the city. From the point of view of church history, the existence of Christians in ʿAyn al-Tamr is not surprising at all, since Christianity had had a significant presence on Persian soil for centuries before the arrival of Islam in the region.[47] From 410 CE onwards, the Persian church even counted on an independent ecclesiastical organization that would pursue the "Nestorian" doctrine, a development that was tolerated and even supported by the Sasanian dynasty, eager to counterbalance the aggressive religious policy of the Roman Empire since Constantine.[48]

The third concerns the fact that the *ghilmān* were captured while learning the scriptures, that is, receiving ecclesiastical education and formation (probably in Syriac), which suggests that their families enjoyed a high status among the Arab tribes. Apparently the Christians in ʿAyn al-Tamr played a similar role as the famous *ʿibād* from al-Ḥīrah, forming a local, urbanized, and literate Arab elite. In any case, given their status as Arabs, their social rank would always be lower than that of the Persian aristocracy, which, after the suppression of al-Ḥīrah's kingdom in 602 CE, occupied the highest positions in the local administration. Their hostage status supports this hypothesis: the practice of taking hostages among the children of prominent families functioned as warrant of their loyalty or of non-aggression; it is understandable in the period preceding the Islamic conquest, when relations between the Sasanian authorities and the Arab tribes were going through very tense moments.[49]

The chroniclers have not preserved much evidence about Nuṣayr, the father of Mūsā. The texts repeat again and again that his son Mūsā was a *mawlā* of the Marwānid Umayyads, a condition that he presumably inherited from his father. However, despite the prominence of the Umay-

yads in the conquest of Syria, there is no testimony that allows us to locate specific members of the Umayyad lineage taking part in the conquest of Iraq. When and how did the encounter between the captive Nuṣayr and the Umayyad Marwānids take place? In the absence of information, we can only speculate. Thus, several compilers transmit the notice that the captives of ʿAyn al-Tamr were dispatched to Medina and delivered to the caliph ʿUthmān.[50] The only report we have about Nuṣayr after his captivity places him, like his fellow captives, in conditions very far from what could be expected of a servant or manumitted slave. The unique notice, which must date to sometime after 41/661, places Nuṣayr in the closest circle of the caliph Muʿāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41/661-60/680), as a member of his bodyguard no less.[51]

Mūsā was born in Syria, in the village (*qaryah*) of Kafr Mary, in the year 19/640.[52] The first decades of his life remain totally obscure and we will have to wait until the 60s/680s to find an isolated but very revealing indication that allows us to state that, as with so many other *mawālī*, Mūsā continued to prosper under the Umayyads. It is a report mentioning his participation in the civil war between the supporters of the Marwānid Umayyads and those of the anti-caliph ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr. In this conflict, Egypt favored the latter, so that the Marwānids sent an army there under the command of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān (d. 85–6/705), future governor of the region. In that army also came Bishr ibn Marwān, son and brother of caliphs, and next to him appears Mūsā b. Nuṣayr.[53] There is no further mention of Mūsā's participation in this war, although Ṭabarī notes the strong involvement of Bishr in favor of his brothers in Mesopotamia.[54]

At an indeterminate date between 73/692 and 76/695, Mūsā appeared alongside Bishr b. Marwān in the government of Iraq, his country of origin.[55] The text of the chronicler Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871) does not indicate his position, but one source points out that he held the office of vizier and counsellor (*wazīr wa-mushīr*); another, that he was appointed by the caliph himself as the collector of the *kharāj* or land tax in Basra.[56] We might note first his proximity to his family's place of origin, ʿAyn al-Tamr, and second, as Morony has pointed out, that this was a region

where the taxation system of the Sasanian era still had very considerable weight.[57]

The death of Bishr in 75/694–5 seemed first to be a setback for Mūsā, since it revealed that there were problems in the economic management, which brought him the enmity of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik. According to a testimony collected by Ibn ʿIdhārī, Mūsā was accused of appropriating money from the public treasury (*al-amwāl*), wherefore the caliph ordered him to be apprehended and condemned him to death.[58] Mūsā then asked for the protection of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz , who was already governor of Egypt, and it was agreed that the sentence should be commuted to the payment of a considerable sum valued at 100,000 dinars, half of which came from the account of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz himself. Having thus resolved the conflict, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz brought him to Egypt, and a few years later, on a date between 78–9/698 and 89–90/708, appointed him governor of Ifrīqiyyah, a position subordinate to the governor of Egypt.[59] From Ifrīqiyyah, Mūsā would make the leap to al-Andalus in the year 92–3/711. He would never return to Iraq; other campaigns awaited him in the western Mediterranean, which would transform him into a semi-legendary character and the hero of the conquest of al-Andalus, at the side of Tāriq b. Ziyād.

Having established that Mūsā's origin in ʿAyn al-Tamr points to a good knowledge of administrative and political practices ultimately rooted in late antique Iranian traditions, and given his eminent role in the first years of al-Andalus, it is unsurprising to detect traces of Iranian taxation and measure systems in the Islamic West, as will be shown in the following.

The fossilization of Persian elements in Romance language: Taxes and measures

The year 92–3/711 marked the beginning of the Islamic conquest of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo and the establishment of al-Andalus under Islamic government, first under the suzerainty of the *wilāyah* (rule) of Ifrīqiyyah, then under the Umayyad Emirate. In the following years, Islamic expansion there would continue, coming to embrace almost the

whole Iberian Peninsula as well as dominating the province of Septimania, to the north of the Pyrenees.

However, halfway through the second/eighth century, the conquests halted, and now began the process of expansion of the Latin kingdoms at the expense of the Andalusian territory. First came the Carolingians, to the north of the Pyrenees, advancing into the northeast of the peninsula, conquering Narbonne in the year 141–2/759, Girona in 168–9/785, and Barcelona in 184–5/801. At the same time, new political entities started to emerge in the Cantabrian area, gradually evolving into the Latin kingdoms of the north of the peninsula. In their advance towards the south, these political entities would take on many of the Islamic institutions of the conquered territory, which becomes visible in the surviving documentation of these states, written in Latin and Romance. In particular, the Latin kingdoms would adopt Islamic taxation and measures systems; thus, the Arab origin of Romance forms like the tax of the *alcabala*, or measures like the *almud*, the *arroba*, and the *arrobada* is well known.[60]

This peculiarity of the Iberian Peninsula allows us to reconstruct the first layer of these institutions as they existed at the time of the Islamic conquest through—paradoxically—the Latin documentation, which provides data that otherwise would have been lost. As in other territories of the Dār al-Islām, the early institutions of the conquest period in al-Andalus evolved and disappeared, supplanted and superseded by the canonical Islamic system that was developed later. However, in the territories conquered by the Latin kingdoms, fossilized names reveal a reality that the later Arabic texts seem to ignore. Among these institutions, we can recognize several of Iranian origin, and that can be attributed to the time of the conquest carried out by Mūsā b. Nuṣayr.

The accounts of the conquest of Mesopotamia repeatedly mention the imposition of a certain tribute, the *ṭasqā*, and the obligation to pay taxes in various measures, including the *qafīz*. Both terms, *ṭasqā* and *qafīz*, appear centuries later in Romanized versions in a place as remote as the western end of the Mediterranean, in al-Andalus, and do so in a context that stopped being Islamic after its conquest by the Latin kingdoms. These

references demonstrate the great weight of the Persian element in the conquest of al-Andalus.

The earliest mention of *ṭasqā* is found in the Babylonian Talmud, a text that contains a broad set of rules governing the lives of Jews living on Sasanian soil. Among these rules is the obligation to pay the *ṭasqā* tax, a tax that was justified by the fact that the state was the sole owner of arable land. Those who exploited it, with the right of usufruct, had to satisfy the payment of a fee to the state—of proportional character—that authorized them to exploit these lands.[61] With the Islamic conquest, the *ṭasqā* was levied on the crops of state lands conquered by force (*arḍ ʿanwah*)[62] and was still proportional: in the fourth/tenth century, Qudāmah b. Jaʿfar (d. ca. 75/948) still defined the *ṭasqā* as "taxes (that) are levied on state lands in accordance with the terms of the leases and the quality of the land, and half of the share in crops was levied on the lands."[63] Despite these late references, we can perceive a gradual displacement of the term in favor of *kharāj*, which ultimately replaces it completely. Unlike the term *ṭasqā*, probably Iranian Persian, the term *kharāj* has qurʾānic resonances.[64] However, on the other side of the Mediterranean, and in a Latin context, this tax did not disappear, but rather survived until the late Middle Ages.

The earliest mention of this tax in the Latin sources appears in a document dated 802 CE, which includes the obligation to satisfy the abbey of Caunes (Minervois) with the payment of *tascaset decima*.[65] This first mention of the tax of the *tasca* appears in an area that had been part of al-Andalus in the Septimania, where the presence of Islam was brief, between 719 and 759 CE, but, according to this document, intense. The references to this tax, the *tasca* or *tascha*, are repeated in the Latin documentation on both sides of the eastern end of the Pyrenees, in Septimania and Catalonia, until the later medieval centuries.[66] This is not just a question of nomenclature; as Viladrich has shown, as its Eastern equivalent, the *tasca*/*tascha* is a tax that is applied for the usufruct of land for life and has a hereditary character.[67]

Like *ṭasqā*, the term *qafīz* has a Persian origin as a measure for aggregates and liquids; it dates at least as far back as the fourth century BCE,

when it first was mentioned by Xenophon in the *Anabasis* in an Iranian context.[68] The Muslims adopted this measure and the Islamic jurists consecrated it as a canonical measure by associating it with the first caliphs. Thus, Abū Yūsuf pointed out in his *Kitāb al-Kharāj* that "when ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb surveyed the lands of al-Sawād, he found them to measure 36,000,000 *jarīb*s, and levied on each *jarīb* of cereal-growing land taxes per dirham or per *qafīz* of yield."[69] Note, first, that the appraisal is carried out in an area where the Persians had ruled for centuries, and second, that the surface measure used, the *jarīb*, is also of Persian origin.[70]

The same term appears in the Latin and Romance documentation of the Iberian Peninsula from the late third/ninth century in the form *kafiz*, *cafiz*, or *cahiz*, as well as its derivative, *kafizada*. The earliest mention in Latin is in a document dating back to 894 CE, which includes the sale of a vineyard in the Maresme, that is, in the eastern end of the Pyrenees, and where the term *kaficada* is used as a unit of area.[71] Another mention of the *kafiz*, now as a measure of capacity, is documented in the Ribagorza, in the central Pyrenees region, dated in the year 925 CE.[72] In the year 931 CE we can document another similar mention in Viguera, in the Ebro valley.[73] It is evident that by the end of the fourth/tenth century, *kafiz*, as a reference to area or a measure of capacity, was well known throughout the Pyrenean region.[74]

In both cases, the use of *tasca* and *kafiz* in Latin and Romance indicates an Iranian influence that can only be explained as going back to the oldest layer of Islamic administrative practice in the Iberian Peninsula, which in its turn has roots in a Mesopotamian and Iranian substratum. Having stated this, we must suppose that the governor Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, and maybe other Iranized Arabs from around al-Ḥīrah who had come to form part of the leading elite in the early Umayyad Caliphate, applied their expertise in administrative and taxation matters and thus left an Iranian imprint in a region as far away as al-Andalus.

Conclusion

This survey has shown that the discovery of new evidence in terms of written and archaeological material on the one hand, and the reassessment of already known material inspired by innovative approaches in cultural studies on the other, may yield new insights in the study of al-Ḥīrah and the Naṣrids, and contributes to a better understanding of their role in the context of late antique Iran. It further highlights the key role played by the Christianized and Iranized Arabs of Iraq, soon to become members of the leading elite in the caliphate, as catalysts of cultural contact and Iranization not only in pre-Islamic, but also in Islamic times, when the conquests widened their radius of movement enormously. This process is exemplified by the case of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, the conqueror of al-Andalus. Finally, it has demonstrated that, by analyzing material that normally falls outside of the scope of a Middle Eastern historian such as Latin documentation, one might detect Iranian influence in unexpected corners of the Mediterranean.

Notes

1. See the recent surveys of the history of Late Antique Studies: Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 18–48 and Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and His People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–47.

2. Al-Azmeh has argued extensively in favor of seeing Islamic civilization as the "most successful crystallization" of Late Antiquity; ibid., 2, *et passim*.

3. Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbors and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

4. Cf. maps 1, 2, and index in Isabel Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra: Eine arabische Kulturmetropole im spätantiken Kontext* (Islamic History and Civilization 104; Leiden: Brill, 2014).

5. For a long time, the only monograph available was Gustav Rothstein, *Die Dynastie der Laḫmiden in al-Ḥîra: Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1898; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1968), complemented only in the 1960s by the important article of Meir J. Kister, "Al-Ḥīra: Some Notes on its Relations with Arabia," *Arabica* 15 (1968): 143–169.

6. Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, passim.

7. Eadem, "The ʿIbād of al-Ḥīra: An Arab Christian Community in Late Antique Iraq," in Angelika Neuwirth, Michael Marx and Nicolai Sinai (eds.), *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 323–347; eadem, "Late Antique Iran and the Arabs: The Case of al-Hira," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 6 (2013): 115–126; Greg Fisher and Philip Wood, "Writing the History of the 'Persian Arabs': The Pre-Islamic Perspective on the 'Naṣrids' of al-Ḥīrah," *Iranian Studies* 49 (2016): 247–290; Adam Talib, "Topoi and Topography in the Histories of al-Hira," in Philip Wood (ed.), *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 123–147; Philip Wood, "Al-Ḥīra and Its Histories," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136 (2016): 785–799.

8. For instance, cf. Richard E. Payne, *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 56; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015); Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008); and Joel Thomas Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 40; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

9. Cf. Greg Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and Empires before Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) with further references, and the numerous works by Irfan Shahîd.

10. Cf. the state of research sketched by Denis Genequand, "The Archaeological Evidence for the Jafnids and the Naṣrids," in Fisher, *Arabs and Empires*, 172–213, and Peter Edwell et al., "Arabs in the Conflict between Rome and Persia," in Fisher, *Arabs and Empires*, 214–275.

11. Cf. the survey of Stefan Hauser, "Christliche Archäologie im Sassanidenreich: Grundanlagen der Interpretation und Bestandaufnahme der Evidenz," in Arafa Mustafa (ed.), *Inkulturation des Christentums im Sasanidenreich* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2007), 93–136.

12. David Talbot Rice, "The Oxford Excavations at Hira," *Ars Islamica* 1 (1934): 51–73; idem, "The Oxford Excavations at Hira, 1931," *Antiquity* 6 (1932): 276–291, idem, "The Oxford Excavations at Hira," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* (1932): 254–268. The results are partly kept in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

13. Mahmud Ali, "Tanqībat fī al-Ḥīra," *Sumer* 2 (1946): 29–32.

14. Barbara Finster and Jürgen Schmidt, *Sasanidische und frühislamische Ruinen im Iraq* (Baghdader Mitteilungen 8; Berlin: Mann, 1976).

15. Yasuyoshi Okada, "Excavations at Ain Shai'a Ruins and Dukakin Caves," *Al-Rāfidān* 10 (1989): 27–88; idem, "Early Christian Architecture in the Iraqi South-Western Desert," *Al-Rāfidān* 12 (1991): 72–83; idem, "Ain Shai'a and the Early Gulf Churches: An Architectural Analogy," Al-Rāfidān 13 (1992): 87–93.

16. Martina Mueller-Wiener, Ulrike Siegel, Martin Gussone, and Ibrahim Salman, "Archaeological Survey of al-Hira/Iraq. Fieldwork Cam-

paign 2015," *Fondation Max van Berchem* (2015); cf. the report by Martina Mueller-Wiener and Ulrike Siegel, "The Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic City of al-Hira: First Results of the Archaeological Survey 2015," in Barbara Horejs, Roderick B. Salisbury, Felix Höflmayer, Teresa Bürge et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 10th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Volume 2* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 639–652.

17. Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, 10–26.

18. Eadem, *Al-Ḥīra*, 21; Wood, "Al-Ḥīra and Its Histories," 798–799, *et passim*.

19. For this problem, cf. Robert G. Hoyland, "Insider and Outsider Sources: Historiographical Reflections on Late Antique Arabia," in Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Greg Fisher (eds.), *Inside and Out: Interactions between Rome and the Peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian Frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Late Antique History and Religion 8; Leuven: Peeters, 2014): 267–280.

20. Abū'l-Baqāʾ al-Ḥillī, *Manāqib al-mazyadīyyah fī akhbār mulūk al-asadiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Khuraysāt and Ṣālih Mūsā Darādika (2 vols.; Amman: n.p., 1984; repr. Al-ʿAyn: Markaz Zāyid li'l-Turāth wa'l-Taʾrīkh, 2000).

21. Kister, "Al-Ḥīra," 151, *et passim*.

22. Rothstein, *Die Dynastie der Laḫmiden in al-Ḥîra*, 5–12.

23. Buṭrus Ḥaddād (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar al-akhbār al-bīʿiyyah: wa-huwa'l-qism al-mafqūd min "al-Taʾrīkh al-Siʿirdī"(?)* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Dīwān, 2000); Herman Teule, "L'abrégé de la chronique ecclésiastique (*Muḫtaṣār* [*sic*] *al-aḫbār al-bīʿiyyah*) et la chronique de Séert. Quelques sondages," in Muriel Debié (ed.), *Historiographie syriaque* (Études syriaques 6; Paris: Geuthner, 2009), 161–177; Philip Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 70–71.

24. Wood, "Al-Ḥīra and Its Histories," 789.

25. Greg Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), *passim*.

26. Edwell et al., "Arabs in the Conflict between Rome and Persia," in Fisher, *Arabs and Empires*, 214–275; Isabel Toral-Niehoff, "Imperial Con-

tests and the Arabs: The World of Late Antiquity on the Eve of Islam," in Armando Salvatore, Roberto Tottoli, Babak Rahimi, et al. (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 59–76.

27. Toral-Niehoff, "The ʿIbād of al-Ḥīra," *passim*.

28. Greg Fisher has dedicated much of his work to the tribal aspects of the Naṣrid state and to the interactions between the Roman Empire and the Arab tribes.

29. For this concept, cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick (ed.), *The Trans/national Study of Culture: A Translational Perspective* (Concepts for the Study of Culture 4; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

30. Talib, "Topoi and Topography," *passim*.

31. Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, 10–23.

32. Rina Drory, "The Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya: Cultural Authority in the Making," *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 33–49.

33. Kirill Dmitriev is preparing a study on the poetical school of al-Ḥīrah in the context of Late Antiquity.

34. Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, 68; eadem, "Late Antique Iran and the Arabs," 120–122.

35. For the relationship between al-Ḥīrah, the Ḥijāz, and other Arabic tribes in particular, cf. Kister, "Al-Ḥīra," *passim*.

36. Michael Lecker, "The Levying of Taxes for the Sassanians in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2008): 109–126.

37. Idem, "Were the Ghassānids and the Byzantines behind Muḥammad's *hijra*?," in Denis Genequand and Christian Julien Robin (eds.), *Les Jafnides, des rois arabes au service de Byzance (VIe siècle de l'ère chrétienne) actes du colloque de Paris, 24–25 novembre 2008* (Orient & Méditerranée 17; Paris: Éditions De Boccard, 2015), 268–286. Lecker has even suggested that the Ghassānids—and their Byzantine overlords—were active behind the scene of the *hijrah*, encouraging the Anṣār to provide Muḥammad and his Companions with a safe haven, and thus to counteract the Jews as Sasanian agents.

38. Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, 51–58.

39. For example, via poems like the "Creation Poem" by the Ḥīran

poet ʿAdī b. Zayd. Cf. eadem, "Eine poetische Gestaltung des Sündenfalls: Das Mythos in dem vorislamisch-arabischen Schöpfungsgedicht von ʿAdī b. Zayd," in Dirk Hartwig, Walter Homolka, Michael J. Marx, and Angelika Neuwirth (eds.), *"Im vollen Licht der Geschichte": Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und die Anfänge der kritischen Koranforschung* (Ex Oriente Lux 8; Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2008), 235–256; Kirill Dmitriev, "An Early Christian Arabic Account of the Creation of the World," in Neuwirth et al., *The Qurʾān in Context*, 349–347.

40. Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Neuwirth et al., *The Qurʾān in Context*; Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010).

41. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101.

42. Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, *passim*.

43. Dwight F. Reynolds, "Al-Maqqarī's Ziryāb: The Making of a Myth," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 11 (2008): 155–168; Ahmad b. Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min gusn al-Andalus al-ratib*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (8 vols.; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1408/1988), 1.344, 3.122–133 (quoting Ibn Ḥayyān), 3.615.

44. Cf. note 4 above.

45. Regarding the Iranian troops stationed in al-Ḥīrah, cf. Kister, "Al-Ḥīra," 165–167.

46. The episode is preserved in very similar variants in Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, ed. M. A. Bayḍūn (6 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2005), 2.324, 345; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Muḥammad ʿAlī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2000), 141, 150–152.

47. This border region, however, became also the retreat of dissidents, like many Syrian Monophysites and heretic ascetics persecuted by Justin and Justinian. We have reports that the oasis of ʿAyn al-Tamr, known as Payram in Christian sources, became the refuge of the fanatic Monophysite sect of Julian of Halicarnassus; cf. Theresa Hainthaler, *Christ-*

liche Araber vor dem Islam: Verbreitung und konfessionelle Zugehörigkeit; eine Hinführung (Eastern Christian Studies 7; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 105 *et passim*, and Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, 172.

48. For these developments in Persian church history, and particularly in regard to al-Ḥīra, see the survey in Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, 151–210.

49. "The *Rahāʾin* were youths from Arab tribes taken by the kings of al-Ḥīra as hostages guaranteeing that their tribes would not raid the territories of al-Ḥīra and that they would fulfill the terms of their pacts and obligations between them and the kings of al-Ḥīra. They counted—according to a tradition quoted by Abū'l-Baqāʾ—500 youths and stayed 6 months at the court of al-Ḥīra. After this period they were replaced by others"; see Kister, "Al-Ḥīra," 167. As we can deduct from the statement about these hostages in ʿAyn al-Tamr, the Persians continued this effective practice after their seizure of power in 602 CE.

50.Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, eds. Suhayl Zakkār and Riyāḍ Ziriklī (13 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 6.255.

51. Abū ʿUbayd ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb b. ʿAmr al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, ed. Jamāl Ṭalbah (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2003), 2.387; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawḍ al-miʿṭār fī khabar al-aqṭār: muʿjam jughrāfī maʿa fahāris shāmilah*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnān, 1984), 33; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn ʿIdhārī al-Marrākushī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār mulūk al-Andalus wa'l-Maghrib*, ed. Georges-Séraphin Colin and Évariste Levi-Provençal (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1951), 2.22–23; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar wa-dīwān al-mubtadaʾ wa'l-khabar fī taʾrīkh al-ʿarab wa'l-barbar wa-man ʿāṣarahum min dhawī al-shaʾn al-akbār*, ed. Khalīl Shaḥādah (8 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 4.224; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Abū Bakr Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyan wa-anbāʾ abnā ahl al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (8 vols.; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1970), 5.317–318; Anon., *Fatḥ al-Andalus*: Luis Molina (ed.), *La conquista de al-Andalus* (Madrid: CSIC, 1994), 11–12; ʿAlī b. Muḥammad ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī'l-taʾrīkh*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qāḍī (10 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1987), 4.252.

52. Between January 2 and December 20, 640. Curiously, this is one of the few pieces of information about the origins of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr upon which all chroniclers agree. Cf. Bakrī, *Al-Masālik*, ed. Ṭalbah, 2.387; Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawḍ al-miʿṭār*, ed. ʿAbbās, 33; Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, ed. ʿAbbās, 1.283; ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, *Taʾrīkh Ibn Ḥabīb*, ed. Jorge Aguadé (Madrid: CSIC, 1981), 136, no. 391; Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Maghrib (I)*: Reinhardt P.A. Dozy (ed.), *Histoire de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne, Al-Bayano 'l-Mogrib et fragments de la chronique d'Arîb (de Cordove) (I)* (Leiden: Brill, 1848), 46; idem, *Bayān (II)*, ed. Colin and Levi-Provençal, 22; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyan*, ed. ʿAbbās, 5.329; *La conquista de al-Andalus*, ed. Molina, 11; ʿAbd al-Malik b. Abī'l-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. al-Kardabūs, *Kitāb al-Iktifāʾ fī akhbār al-khulafāʾ*, ed. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ghāmidī (3 vols.; Medina: Al-Jāmiʿah al-Islamiyyah, 2008), 1002.

53. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī, *Al-Imāmah wa'l-siyāsah: wa-huwa al-maʿrūf bi-taʾrīkh al-khulafāʾ*, ed. ʿAlī Shīrī (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1990), 2.69; Taqī al-Dīn Abū'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawāʿiẓ wa'l-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār*, ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr (4 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1988), 1.387.

54. Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. Bayḍūn, 2.524, 529–530.

55. According to Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. Bayḍūn, 2.542, Bishr b. Marwān became governor of Basra in 73/692–3.

56. Abū'l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ al-Miṣr*: Charles C. Torrey (ed.), *The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa and Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1922; repr. Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2002), 203. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Imāmah wa'l-siyāsah*, ed. Shīrī, 2.69; Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Histoire de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne*, ed. Dozy, 1.24.

57. Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984; repr. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005), 51–68.

58. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Histoire de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne*, ed. Dozy, 1.24–25.

59. The historians disagree about the date of this event, ranging from 78/697–8 in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (*History of the Conquest of Egypt, North*

Africa and Spain, ed. Torrey, 87) to 89/707–8 in Balādhurī (*Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. ʿAlī, 141). The most common date is 79/698–9: Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Imāmah wa'l-siyāsah*, ed. Shīrī, 2.72; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Ḍabbī, *Bughyat al-multamis fī taʾrīkh rijāl ahl al-Andalus*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sawifī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1997), no. 1334; Ibn al-Abbār, *Kitāb al-Ḥullah al-siyarāʾ li-Ibn al-Abbār*, ed. Ḥusayn Muʾnis (2 vols.; Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1984), 2.332.

60. Arnald Steiger, *Contribución a la fonética del hispano-árabe y de los arabismos en el ibero-románico y el siciliano* (Madrid: CSIC, 1991 [1932]).

61. Mercé Viladrich, "La transferencia de términos fiscales islámicos de oriente a occidente: Ṭasq y tascha/tasca en Catalunya Vella y Septimania durante la primera organización emiral omeya," in Xavier Ballestín and Ernesto Pastor (eds.), *Lo que vino de Oriente. Horizontes, praxis y dimensión material de los sistemas de dominación fiscal en Al-Andalus (VII-IX)* (Oxford: Archeopress, 2013), 46.

62. Qudāmah b. Jaʿfar, *Kitāb al-Kharāj wa-ṣināʿat al-kitābah*, ed. Muḥammad al-Zubaydī (Baghdad: Dār al-Rashīd, 1981), 202.

63. Ibid., *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 221.

64. Q Muʾminūn 23:72, "Or dost thou ask of them any reward? But the reward of thy Lord is best; and He is the Best of providers" (*am tasʾaluhum kharjan fa-kharāj rabbika khayrun wa-huwa khayru'l-rāziqīn*); *The Noble Qur'an. English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary,* trans. Muhammad Taqî-ud-Dîn Al-Hilâlî and Muhammad Muhsin Khân (Medina: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qurʾān, 1419/1999). Cf. Viladrich, "La transferencia de términos fiscales," 47. About the origin and evolution of the term *kharāj*, see Ghaida Khazna Katbi, *Islamic Land Tax – Al-Kharaj. From the Islamic Conquest to the ʿAbbasid Period* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 14–19.

65. Claude Devic and Joseph Vaissete (eds.), *Histoire Générale de Languedoc avec des notes et les pièces justificatives. Tome deuxième* (Toulouse: J.-B. Paya, 1875), 597–598, doc. XI: *ibidem vobis exinde tascas et decimas persolvere debuissemus.*

66. Cf. numerous examples in Viladrich, "La transferencia de términos fiscales," 48–52.

67. Ibid., 50.

68. Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. and ed. Carlos Varias (Madrid: Cátedra, 1999), 1.5.6. In the text we find *kapithē*, the Greek transcription of Parthian *kapīč*. Cf. Adrian David Hugh Bivar, "Achaemenid Coins, Weights and Measures," in Ilya Gershevitch (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 2: The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 610–639, 633–634.

69. Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd and Saʿd Ḥasan Muḥammad (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah li'l-Turāth, 1999), 46; idem, *Taxation in Islām (Vol. III): Abū Yūsuf's Kitāb al-Kharāj*, trans. Aharon Ben Shemesh (Leiden; London: Brill, 1969), 96.

70. Cf. the equivalences in Walther Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 48–50.

71. Angel Fabrega i Grau (ed.), *Diplomatari de la catedral de Barcelona, documents dels anys 844–1260, t. I: Documents dels anys 844–1000* (Barcelona: Arxiu capitular de la catedral de Barcelona, 1995), 193–194: *in ipsa uinea, ipsa quarta parte, kaficadas duas* (March 23, 894).

72. Ramón d'Abadal i de Vinyals, *Catalunya Carolíngia, vol: 3/2: Els Comtats de Pallars i Ribagorça* (Barcelona: Institut dʿEstudis Catalans, 2007), 354: *terra juris meis quem abeo de ruptura parentum meorum in castro Avileto, ubi dicitur cubile... et est ad seminandum I k(afiz)* (May 925).

73. Antonio Ubieto Arteta (ed.), *Cartulario de Albelda* (Valencia: Anubar, 1981), 6: *ut commutaremus (omines de ciuitate quod dicitur Vecaria) tecum (el abad Auriolo) terras in loco quod dicitur Loreto iuxta Sancti Pantaleonis. Contulistis nobis in parte nostra agrum quod situm est iusta Fastigia Sanctarum ecclesiarum in seminatura terra kafiz et medio* (January 11, 931).

74. Jesús Lorenzo Jiménez and Ernesto Pastor, "Dominando territorios, imponiendo medidas: de *Banbalūna* a *Barsilūna*," in Ballestín and Pastor (eds.), *Lo que vino de Oriente*, 61.

Local Histories from the Medieval Persianate World: Memory, Legitimacy, and the Early Islamic Past

Mimi Hanaoka

Abstract

Medieval Persianate local histories form a heterogeneous genre, but a trait these diverse texts share is that they perform a balancing act: they simultaneously respond to and challenge assumptions about the centrality of Arabs, Arabic, Arabia, Iraq, Syria, the *ṣaḥābah* (Companions of the Prophet), *tābiʿūn* (Successors of the Companions), Alids, *sayyid*s, and *sharīf*s while at the same time claiming their own importance within these frameworks. Authors of Persianate local histories composed during the fourth/tenth- to ninth/early-fifteenth centuries argued for the legitimacy and centrality of their communities on the peripheries of empire by including narratives about descendants of the Prophet associated with the region addressed in the history, be it a city, town, or province; incorporating narratives of legitimating dreams and visions; associating *ṣaḥābah* with the land; highlighting sites of pious visitation (*ziyārāt*) and other sources of blessing or sacred power (*barakah*); and incorporating sacralizing etymologies. Within the larger discourse of Persian-language historical writing in the Islamicate world, there are different traditions, which may be distinguished by the varying modes of legitimacy to which they turn. Local histories about the Seljuqs of Rūm (Anatolia) written in the Persian language offer an instructive contrast to Persianate local histories centering on cities and regions of modern-day Iran and Central Asia. These histories about the Seljuqs of Rūm—which are the most similar extant types of histories from the

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Islamicate world to the Persianate local histories—are contemporary with the Persianate local histories and are from a geographically contiguous region. However, in contrast to the Persianate local histories of Iran and Central Asia, these locally-oriented histories about the Seljuqs of Rūm composed during the seventh/thirteenth to eighth/fourteenth centuries focus on the construction of dynastic legitimacy and couch claims to legitimacy in terms of military success, genealogy, and the virtues of kingly rule.

Introduction and overview

Medieval local histories from the Persianate world form a notoriously heterogeneous genre. An issue of *Iranian Studies* in 2000 featured the variegated materials subsumed under the umbrella of Persianate local histories and highlighted the difficulty of speaking of these texts as a coherent genre. Persianate, in the broadest sense, has been used by scholars to refer to practices, texts, and norms prevalent in lands historically influenced by Persianate language and culture, which encompasses not only modern-day Iran but much of Central Asia as well as parts of South Asia. This essay considers Persianate local histories, mainly from what is today considered Iran and Central Asia, alongside contemporary Persian-language sources from Rūm (Anatolia) in order to highlight some characteristic traits of the former. It is guided by two questions: first, if medieval Persianate local histories can even be considered a genre, what are some recurring or signature characteristics and motifs? Second, if we compare these Persianate histories against sources about Rūm—a roughly contemporary and similarly heterogeneous collection of texts—what are the differences between them, and why do these differences exist? In this attempt to corral disparate texts together as a genre, the conclusions of this essay will necessarily be broad and comparative.

In this article, I use the term "Persianate" specifically to refer to the geographic region of the vast lands inhabited by a loose Persian

ethnic group and originally held under Achaemenid and Sasanian imperial control. I use this broader and shifting term "Persianate" (and so "Persia") over "Iranian" (and so "Iran," *Īrān*, *Īrānshahr*), as "Iran" and "Iranian" are less relevant for fourth/tenth- to ninth/early-fifteenth-century local histories.[1] Also, I have chosen a subset of sources that are written at least partly in the Persian language (an issue I will discuss in more detail below). Therefore, I here use "Persianate" as a broad geographic and ethnic category—stemming from the notional entity of "Persia," broadly defined—whereas I use "Persian" or "Persian-language" to mean sources composed at least partly in the Persian language that originated from a much wider geographical and cultural area than that signified by the term "Persianate."

As Iran and the Persianate lands transitioned from the late antique period into the Islamic era, a heterogeneous but related collection of locally-oriented histories were composed, translated, edited, and compiled. Patterns within city and regional histories from the peripheries of the Islamic empire—far from its perceived heartlands in Arabia, Syria, and Iraq—identify local structures of authority and legitimacy and also resonate with universal Islamic themes and *topoi*. Local identity manifests itself differently in the Persian-language sources from Rūm and, through these differences, illuminates the distinctive characteristics of Persianate histories.

Persianate local histories and Persian-language dynastic histories from Rūm provide contrasting examples of the ways in which Persian-language historical writing manifests the priorities and symbols of legitimation at the time of their production. Boundaries, rulers, and norms shift over the centuries, as do the ways in which authors frame their claims for legitimacy and articulate their multilayered identities. Thus, Persianate sources show vestiges of their pre-Islamic past at the same time that they are steeped in Islamic norms. In contrast, sources from Seljuq Rūm concentrate more heavily on dynastic elements to demonstrate legitimacy.

This essay considers three specific literary strategies that the authors of Persianate annalistic local histories employed to frame claims to

legitimacy, identity, and belonging in their works: constructing etymologies (Bukhara, Qum, and Ṭabaristān); associating *ṣaḥābah* and other living *faḍāʾil* (virtues) with the region (Ṭabaristān and Bayhaq); and likewise associating *sayyid*s, *sharīf*s, and Alids with the region (Qum and Ṭabaristān). The final section of this essay argues that within the heterogeneous genre of medieval Islamic Persian-language local histories, multiple modes of legitimacy are employed to forge different connections to memory and history. Persian-language sources from Rūm depart markedly from their Persianate counterparts in terms of the ways in which legitimacy is presented and connections to earlier histories are asserted. In contrast to the Persianate histories, however, locally-oriented histories from Rūm composed during the seventh/thirteenth to eighth/ fourteenth centuries focus on the construction of dynastic legitimacy and couch claims to legitimacy in terms of military success, genealogy, and the virtues of kingly rule.

Four examples of Persinate local history

This essay analyzes four annalistic Persianate local histories from the fourth/tenth- to ninth/early-fifteenth centuries which were composed (to varying degrees) in both Arabic and Persian: *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*,[2] *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*,[3] *Tārīkh-i Qum*,[4] and *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*.[5] Persianate local histories from this period vary in form and content. In terms of form, these local histories lie on a spectrum from biographical dictionaries at one end to narrative chronicles on the other, and they are often some combination of both. In terms of content, historical writing ranges from a town or city history (*Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, and *Tārīkh-i Qum*) to provincial history (*Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*). Linguistically, they are, to varying degrees, bilingual in Persian and Arabic. It is their heterogeneity of form and content that makes it challenging to speak of Persianate local histories as a single genre. The Persianate local histories considered here consist primarily of narrative annalistic chronicle-style material.

Tārīkh-i Bukhārā is a local history that is a Persian translation of a lost Arabic original; the Persian text is simultaneously an abridgment of

the original Arabic and an expansion of it with new material. The original Arabic-language *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā* was written in 332/943 or 944 by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Zakariyyā b. Khaṭṭāb b. Sharīk al-Narshakhī (d. ca. 348/959) from the village of Narshakh in the vicinity of Bukhara, who dedicated it to the Samanid *amīr* Nūḥ b. Naṣr (r. 331–343/943–954) in 332/943–4; it was translated into Persian by Abū Naṣr Aḥmad al-Qubawī in 522/1128–9.[6]

Tārīkh-i Bayhaq is a mid-sixth/twelfth-century Persian local history of Bayhaq, a modest city located in northeastern Iran near the modern city of Mashhad and the Iranian border with Turkmenistan. Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Abī'l-Qāsim Zayd b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169), also known as Ibn Funduq, composed *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* in 563/1167, two years before his death, during the rule of Muʾayyad al-Dawlah Ay Aba (d. 659/1174), who controlled Khurasan.[7]

Tārīkh-i Qum was originally written in Arabic in the fourth/tenth century by Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Qummī (d. ca. 406/1015–6) in 378/988–9, although that original text is now lost. *Tārīkh-i Qum* survives only in the form of a later Persian translation made in 805–806/1402–1403 by Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Qummī for Ibrahīm b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Safī (both fl. late eighth/fourteenth to early ninth/fifteenth century). The translated manuscript was then copied in 837/1433 in the city of Qum.[8]

Finally, Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Isfandiyār (d. after 613/1217), known as Ibn Isfandiyār, composed *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* in Persian in the early part of the seventh/thirteenth century. Both E. G. Browne and ʿAbbās Iqbāl date Ibn Isfandiyār's composition of the text to 613/1216. The history is a composite work: Ibn Isfandiyār composed the original text in Persian and died sometime after 613/1216–7, after which an anonymous compiler working sometime after the eighth/mid-fourteenth century then added to the work by updating it. The anonymous writer continued where Ibn Isfandiyār left off, in 606/1210, and brings the history up to ca. 750/1349.

The three seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth century sources from Rūm that I will consider as heuristic counterpoints here

are the chronicle of Ibn Bībī (d. ca. after 683–4/1285 or 686–7/1288), the chronicle of Karīm al-Dīn Āqsarā'ī (d. ca. between 723–733/1323–1333), and the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq* ("History of the Seljuqs"), completed in 765/1363; they are all Persian-language sources. Naturally, the limited sample set and the nature of the sources themselves constrain my observations and conclusions. While the sources that I compare here are different—Persian-language local histories from Persia during the fourth/tenth to ninth/fifteenth centuries on the one hand (which I have called Persianate local histories) and Persian-language dynastic histories of the Seljuqs of Rūm from the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries on the other—these two bodies of literature are the most closely aligned contemporary sources from the geographically contiguous regions of Persia and Anatolia. There are no extant local histories of Rūm that are truly analogous to the annalistic Persianate local histories. Instead, what we have available to us are dynastic histories, a genre that was well-established by the eighth/fourteenth century in the broader Islamicate world.

Consequently, we must consider apples alongside oranges, as it were, to make any kind of comparative assessment of these Persian-language histories, all locally oriented in their horizons and produced in or around two geographically contiguous regions located on the peripheries of the symbolic heartland of the Islamic empire in Arabia, Iraq, and Syria. There are other important peripheries of the Islamic empire during the fourth/tenth- to ninth/fifteenth centuries, for example Egypt and the Iberian Peninsula. The histories of these regions, which were written in Arabic, could also provide us with fruitful comparanda.[9] However, on account of their geographic proximity and their use of Persian as the language of composition, the abovementioned sources from Rūm offer us the clearest heuristic comparison with the Persianate local histories.

As mentioned above, authors of local histories from the Persianate world argued for the legitimacy and importance of their communities on the peripheries of empire by including narratives about descendants of the Prophet associated with the region; recounting narratives of legiti-

mating dreams and visions; associating *ṣaḥābah* with the land; highlighting sites of pious visitation (*ziyārāt*) and other sources of blessing or sacred power (*barakah*); and incorporating sacralizing etymologies.[10] By pursuing such strategies, the authors of the Persianate local histories claimed the centrality of their ostensibly peripheral regions.[11] In contrast, the construction of dynastic and specifically Seljuq legitimacy are central concerns for the sources from Rūm from the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries, which present claims to such legitimacy in terms of military success, genealogy, and the virtues of kingly rule.

Strategies of legitimation, I: Etymologies in Tārīkh-i Bukhārā, Tārīkh-i Qum, *and* Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān

Qummī adduces multiple possible etymologies for the name of his native city in his *Tārīkh-i Qum*, and in so doing weaves the etymology, mythology, and history of Qum deep into the fabric of revelation and prophecy. *Tārīkh-i Qum* offers multiple etymologies for Qum, some fanciful and some more plausible; many are based on word play.[12] One etymology traces the origins of Qum back to the prophet Noah.[13] Qummī also adduces a Shi'i tradition about the naming of Qum, which claims that Qum is named as such because its inhabitants will be standing (*qāʾim*) steadfast with the family of Muḥammad, and they will stand upright (*qāʾim*) with him and will represent the victory of the family of the Prophet and will come to his aid.[14] Other various possible etymologies suggest that a shepherd's shack or a local stream may be the source of Qum's etymology. Qummī's most striking etymologies for Qum invoke the sacred.

Regardless of the true origin or origins of Qum's name, a story about Qum, Muḥammad, and Iblīs on the night of the *miʿrāj* is particularly noteworthy. The *miʿrāj*, the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem (*al-masjid al-aqṣā*) and subsequent ascension to heaven from there, is a pivotal qurʾānic moment.[15] In asserting Qum's etymology into this qurʾānic event, Qummī embeds Qum deep into the framework of prophetic and Islamic history. According to Qummī:

> On the night of the Prophet's ascension (*miʿrāj*), Iblīs the Accursed came to this place (*boqʿ*) on his knees (*be zānū dar āmade būd*) and he put both his elbows[16] upon his knees, and looked upon the ground. The Prophet said to Iblīs: "*Qum yā malʿūn*" which means "Rise, O accursed one." And it is for this reason that Qum was given the name 'Qum.'[17]

Understood in this way, the prophetic etymology of Qum on the night of the *miʿrāj* is a form of "elaboration of memory," and a way of merging the memory of the early Islamic past and pivotal qurʾānic moments with Qum's Islamic Persianate present.[18] By participating in qurʾānic and biblical events (through an etymology invoking the Prophet Noah), Qum exists both within and beyond time—at once both memorialized in qurʾānic time and existing in its Persianized present.

In *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, Narshakhī incorporates sacralizing etymologies that include prophetic *ḥadīth* as one among other literary strategies to link Bukhara to Muḥammad's legacy and Islamic modes of legitimacy. Narshakhī states that although the region is known by many names, the Companion Salmān al-Fārisī transmitted a tradition of the Prophet about the reason the city is named Bukhara. As a Persian and a Companion of the Prophet, Salmān al-Fārisī and his tradition about the etymology of Bukhara adds another dimension to the ways in which Narshakhī binds Bukhara to Muhammad and early Islamic memory. Narshakhī quotes Salmān al-Fārisī's *ḥadīth* of the Prophet as follows:

> [Salmān said:] "The Prophet of God said that Gabriel told him that in the land of the East was a place called Khurasan. On the Day of the Resurrection and Final Judgment, three cities of Khurasan will be adorned with red rubies and coral, and their radiance will shine about them. Around these cities there will be many angels, and they will praise, glorify, and exalt God. These angels will bring forth these cities onto the plains in grandeur and splendor, like a bride who is brought into the house of her betrothed. In each of these cities there will be

> 70,000 banners and under each banner there will be 70,000 martyrs. In the entourage of each martyr will be 70,000 believers, who will be speaking Persian and receiving salvation. On the Day of Judgment, every side of these cities—to the right and left, front and rear, for a distance of ten days' journey—will be filled with martyrs.
>
> "The Prophet said, 'O Gabriel, tell me the names of these cities.' Gabriel replied, 'The name of one of these cities in Arabic is Qāsimiyyah and in Persian Yishkard. The second in Arabic is Sumrān, in Persian Samarqand. The third in Arabic is Fākhirah, and in Persian Bukhārā.'
>
> The Prophet asked, 'O Gabriel, why is it called Fākhirah?' Gabriel replied, 'Because on the Day of the Resurrection and Final Judgment, Bukhārā shall excel all other cities in glory (*fakhr*) because of the multitude of martyrs [buried there].'[19] The Prophet cried, 'God bless the people of Fākhirah and purify their hearts through the fear of God. Improve their actions and make them among the merciful of my people.'"

Narshakhī then adds, "The significance of this is that from the east to the west it is attested that the people of Bukhārā are noted for their belief and purity."[20]

Narshakhī incorporates this prophetic *ḥadīth* in his history to bind Bukhara to Islamic memory and to the Prophet's legacy. R. N. Frye surveyed the possible etymology and pre-Islamic history of Bukhara, and exhaustively assessed the sources for convincing etymologies; he ultimately found the data inconclusive.[21] Narshakhī's use of this etymology —regardless of its facticity regarding the actual etymology of Bukhara—is significant because he ties the city of Bukhara to the legacy of the Prophet through an etymology related by the Persian Companion Salmān al-Fārisī, thereby asserting a powerful form of non-biological lineage and heirship to the Prophet and his legacy.

The etymologies offered by Persianate local histories may be tied to an Islamic past, a pre-Islamic past, or both, as is the case in *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*. The etymologies and virtues (*faḍāʾil*) of Ṭabaristān are rich in pre-Islamic lore and Alid elements, as well as those that are not discernibly either Islamic or non- or pre-Islamic. Some etymologies offered by the author do capture the ancient Iranian and pre-Islamic character of the region. For example, regarding the etymology of the locale called Farshwāgdar, Ibn Isfandiyār offers several etymologies that range from "living safely" to "land of the mountain, plain, and sea," among others.[22] Ibn Isfandiyār relates that the region of Mazandaran was possessed by demons until the era of Jamshīd, who purportedly conquered them and commanded them to transform the land to make it more habitable and hospitable. The region was originally called *mūz andar ūn*, meaning that the region was within the area of the Mūz mountains.[23] Ibn Isfandiyār neither forgets nor elides the pre-Islamic past, but instead incorporates it into a broader narrative that ultimately leads to the region of Ṭabaristān being imbued with Alids and *sayyid*s and embedded within the Islamic narrative.[24] Memory of the early Islamic past presents a form of legitimacy and belonging, but in this case it is an identity that overlaps with memories of the region's pre-Islamic heritage and earlier non- and pre-Islamic modes of memory, legitimacy, and belonging in the Persianate world and the specifically local context.

Strategies of legitimation, II: ṣaḥābah *and living virtues of the land in* Tārīkh-i Bayhaq *and* Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān

The close association to Muḥammad of the *ṣaḥābah*, *tābiʿūn*, and other early members of the Muslim community expands the notion of heirship from biological connections to ones based on association and community. Just as Muḥammad's biological descendants are held in high esteem as living links to him, individuals who are not biologically linked to the Prophet are also celebrated as living virtues of the land that connect a place to early Islamic memory and bring prestige and legitimacy to the region. These individuals can take the form of *ṣaḥābah*, *tābiʿūn*, and

their descendants, as in the case of *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, or they can be a wider array of individuals who are considered the living *faḍāʾil* of the region, as in the case of *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*.

The term *faḍāʾil*, meaning virtue or excellence, is used in Arabic-language and Persian-language Islamicate writing to refer to a range of virtues, or else to a person, place, or thing that may be considered excellent. Within the genre of Persianate local histories, people—as well as places and natural phenomena—can be referred to as *faḍāʾil*. In the case of Ṭabaristān, this category includes notables,[25] learned men,[26] *imām*s,[27] saints and ascetics,[28] sages and philosophers,[29] and—to a lesser extent—writers and scribes,[30] physicians and poets,[31] and astronomers,[32] all of whom are described in Ibn Isfandiyār's *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*. It is significant that Ibn Isfandiyār's list of virtues of Ṭabaristān includes *faḍāʾil* that are unambiguously Islamic such as *imām*s and saints; those who derive their prestige from the pre-Islamic era such as local notables; and those who are not inherently either, such as poets and physicians. For Ibn Isfandiyār, the markers and signifiers of legitimacy and belonging in Ṭabaristān include a layering of pre-Islamic heritage, early Islamic memory, and merits and virtues that are not necessarily either, but may be considered as generally signifying accomplishments of learning and culture.

Tor has argued for the ways in which Islamic literatures and political theories absorbed, modified, and Islamized pre-Islamic Iranian ideals of rulership, including Sasanian genealogies, titulature, and symbols of rulership.[33] Persianate Islamic identity in *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* is not either-or, but both-and, a multi-dimensional understanding of what constitutes legitimacy and identity in the local sphere of Ṭabaristān and in the broader sweep of Islamic history.

Whereas *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* addresses the *faḍāʾil* of an entire region, Ibn Funduq's *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* catalogs the notable individuals associated with this modest city. And whereas Ibn Isfandiyār's history pays close attention to the forceful displays of fiscal and political autonomy by the inhabitants of Ṭabaristān—thereby emphasizing the activities and importance of important pre-Islamic notable families in Ṭabaristān—Ibn Funduq takes a different approach to depicting the legitimacy of his native land.

Tārīkh-i Bayhaq claims the Companion al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās al-Sulamī (d. after 23/644) as one of its own, as he putatively died in the vicinity of Bayhaq, although no other source that I have identified associates him with Bayhaq. Being associated with Bayhaq could mean that an individual lived, taught, died, or otherwise had ties to the city. In an article, Pourshariati finds that of the *ṣaḥābah* listed by Ibn Funduq, only two individuals had anything to do with Bayhaq that could be verified or corroborated with a source other than Ibn Funduq's history.[34] Building on Pourshariati's earlier work, I argue that one of these two individuals, al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās al-Sulamī (Pourshariati renders his name as al-ʿAbbās b. Mardās al-Salmī), likely had no significant connection to Bayhaq. If he is associated with any region, it is with the desert area surrounding Basra.[35]

ʿAbbās was one of the Companions of the Prophet, a warrior of the Banū Sulaym, and a prominent poet.[36] Not much is known about him (to the extent that it is not entirely clear what his name is),[37] but he nevertheless appears in the *Sīrah* of the Prophet in an incident in which he rebuked the Prophet for what he considered an unfairly meager share of the booty.[38] ʿAbbās also appears in the histories of al-Balādhurī and Khalīfah b. Khayyāṭ as collecting the *zakāt* alms tax from the Banū Sulaym on behalf of the Prophet, and he is purported to have been an envoy from the Prophet to the Arabs of al-Bādiyyah sent to persuade them to participate in the battle of Tabūk.[39]

It is unlikely that we will ever know with certainty whether ʿAbbās actually lived and died in Bayhaq. Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) associates him with the region surrounding Basra.[40] Moreover, if ʿAbbās ever visited or lived in Bayhaq, we would expect him to appear in the *ṭabaqāt* (biographical dictionaries) of Nishapur, which was the closest city of significant size and prominence. However, the *ṭabaqāt* work of al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (fl. ca. fourth/tenth century) remains silent about ʿAbbās. Of ʿAbbās's descendants, the only named individual listed in the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* is Shaykh Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn b. Abī'l-Qāsamak Mirdās, who was a *ḥadīth* teacher who transmitted traditions he learned from the *shaykh al-sunnah* Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Fāṭimah al-Bayhaqī. Neither ʿAbbās's descendant nor

the descendant's *ḥadīth* teacher has an entry in the *ṭabaqāt* of al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī either. For Ibn Funduq, what made ʿAbbās an important person was not his transmission of *ḥadīth* (some of which were eventually included in what became the canonical collections), but rather his proximity to the Prophet as a Companion. As a Companion, ʿAbbās's role tied Bayhaq to the Prophet and to memories of early Islam.

Ibn Funduq's organization of his work underscores his desire to claim for Bayhaq prophetic sanction and blessing through association with *ṣaḥābah*. He begins his chapter on the virtues of Bayhaq with the *ḥadīth* that "None among my Companions dies in a land except that he will be resurrected as a leader and a light for those people on the Day of Resurrection."[41] Ibn Funduq explains in Persian that the *ḥadīth* means that "in every place on the earth that one of the great ones of the Companions of the Prophet dies an exalted death (*shahādat yāfte bāshad*) or bids farewell to the world, [God] will honor that place... and on Judgment Day those Companions will be a leader and a light for those people."[42] Ibn Funduq also writes, "The Prophet of God said, 'Blessed be Nishapur in Khurasan,' because Nishapur in Bayhaq is part of Khurasan, its regions are the best regions, and the blessed Prophet arrived in Khurasan and built in every city"; this is followed by an explanation of why the Arabs were drawn to Khurasan.[43] The purpose and effect of Ibn Funduq's claim that ʿAbbās is a man of Bayhaq is to intertwine the story of Bayhaq with the story of the formative years of Islam. ʿAbbās is part of an apparatus of legitimacy that connects Bayhaq to early Islamic memory and establishes Bayhaq's legitimacy as a bona fide Muslim city of significance.

Tārīkh-i Bayhaq contains scant evidence for the settlement of Arabs in the region, such as mosques, *qanāt* irrigation channels, gates, *mīdān*s, or other physical or symbolic markers of Arab settlement. The insistence of *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* on Arab *ṣaḥābah* as critical early members of the community suggests that the absence of notable early Arab settlers created an undercurrent of anxiety about the region's Islamic legitimacy. Regardless of the veracity of Ibn Funduq's claims, *ṣaḥābah* and *tābiʿūn* bind Bayhaq to the Prophet's legacy and link the modest city with early Islamic memory through central events and characters of the *ummah*.

Strategies of legitimation, III: sayyids, sharīfs, *and Alids in* Tārīkh-i Qum *and* Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān

Descendants of the Prophet brought the prestige and sanction of Muḥammad's legacy to the places with which they were associated. I borrow my understanding of the term "descendants of the Prophet" from Kazuo Morimoto and Teresa Bernheimer, and define them here as a wide array of cross-sectarian individuals and families who claimed—and were believed by their communities to enjoy—kinship with the Prophet, a phenomenon that was both biological and socially constructed.[44] The terms that commonly denote different types of lineal descent from Muḥammad or his kinship group—Alid or *al-ʿAlawī*, Hasanid, Husaynid, Talibid, *sayyid*, and *sharīf*—are all ambiguous. They are used flexibly and with wide variation in the medieval sources themselves, especially in the medieval Islamic east of Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.[45]

In *Tārīkh-i Qum*, the author (and later his translator) bound Qum to key moments and figures in Islamic and cosmic history and to prophetic authority by constructing an identity for the city based on its Alid inhabitants, Ashʿarī Arab Alid progenitors, and a considerable number of *sayyid*s and other descendants of the Prophet. Reports (*akhbār*) and traditions about the *faḍāʾil* of Qum and its areas and inhabitants emphasize the area's Shi'i and *sayyid* identity, through such characters as Shi'i Imāms—especially ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā—as well as the angel Gabriel, Iblīs, Jesus, and the Prophet Muḥammad.[46]

Sites of pious visitation (*ziyārāt*) and other sources of blessing or sacred power (*barakah*) continued to invest the locale with Islamic legitimacy and constantly renewed memories of the early Islamic past. This is the case with the shrine complex of Fāṭimah Maṣʿūmah in Qum. Though not martyred herself, Fāṭimah's hagiographical account is closely tied to that of her brother, the Imām al-Riḍā, martyred in Ṭūs in 203/818.[47] When Fāṭimah died en route from Medina to Marv in 201/816–7 while she was travelling to visit her brother, she was buried in Qum, and her interment there became an occasion for later Safavid rulers to develop it into a full-fledged shrine city.

Fāṭimah's body became a source of *barakah* for the inhabitants of Qum and its visitors and pilgrims. Qummī includes a *ḥadīth* attributed to the Sixth Imām, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), in which the *imām* predicts the future death and burial of his descendant Fāṭimah and claims that "everyone who does *ziyārah* to her will find he or she certainly goes to heaven (*har kas ke ziyārat-e ou dar yābad be-behesht ravad o behesht-e ou rā wājib shavad*).[48] In becoming a site of pious visitation (*ziyārah*), Fāṭimah's body and the shrine sanctuary that surrounded it not only continued to invest Qum with Islamic legitimacy, but also created a way of constantly recognizing and renewing memories of the early Islamic past through Muḥammad's descendants.

Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān includes narratives about the *sayyid*s and *sharīf*s associated with the region, as well as other *faḍāʾil*, or virtues. *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* brims with Islamic characteristics, especially those that emphasize the region's Shi'i credentials and ties to Alid *sayyid*s. There is a section devoted the *sayyid*s who ruled in Ṭabaristān.[49] Ibn Isfandiyār records the names of notables and the places they visited, such as Imām Ḥasan b. ʿAlī visiting a place called Māmṭīr.[50] Descendants of Muḥammad connect the region to Muḥammad's legacy and the memory of the early Muslim community. The *ispahbad*, the local ruler of Ṭabaristān, gave generous gifts during the Hajj season, such as gifts to multiple shrines of members of the house of the Prophet, the poor, and the *amīr*s of Mecca. Ibn Isfandiyār documents the *ispahbad*'s gifts as a way of underscoring how the local ruler of Ṭabaristān acknowledged, respected, and gave generously to the shrines of the Shi'i Imāms and other pious figures.[51]

The solipsism of the peripheries: local texts with local horizons

Persianate local histories are conditioned by their immediate local horizons, and consequently are characterized by a certain degree of solipsism. The authors of these texts composed them with full awareness of the broader *ummah* and notions of what constitutes Islamic legitimacy and authority, but they were not particularly concerned with the centrality or marginality of other cities or regions along the peripheries. Put

another way, the author of *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā* is unconcerned with the perceived centrality or marginality of Qum or Ṭabaristān. The medieval authors or editors of these works do not engage with other ostensibly peripheral regions, although we as historians may consider works from other comparable Persianate peripheries as part of the same genre and may read them side by side, or at least within the same context. This is in contradistinction to universal histories, such as Ṭabarī's encyclopedic chronicle, which is concerned with Islamic history more broadly, from the dawn of time and earlier prophets to the present *dawlah*. Local histories are highly attuned to their locales, and other regions—particularly neighboring communities or agents of the caliph, such as individuals attempting to enforce tax payment—intrude into the local sphere only when they factor into the history of the specific location, be it Bayhaq or Ṭabaristān.

Regional and local histories are preoccupied with local notables and local *faḍāʾil*—material, living, and deceased—whose relevance is generally limited to that particular city or region. Sacred or notable places identified in these histories are generally of local interest, and only on rare occasions—such as the shrine sanctuary of Fāṭimah in Qum—do they have a wider resonance beyond the local or regional context. But these locally significant phenomena are framed within a broader Islamic narrative to assert both local values and participation in the Muslim *ummah*. These phenomena are thus both local and global, universal and specific, Persian and Muslim. For example, the memory of Zoroastrian fire-temples in Qum is not purposefully forgotten or elided but is instead recorded and retained as one of the local *faḍāʾil*.[52] In a similar vein, prominent pre-Islamic families in Ṭabaristān retain their political prestige and importance during the Islamic era; their prestige and eminence remain intact as the region transitions from the pre-Islamic to the Islamic era, and their local importance translates effectively through time and across religious divides.

This local orientation, at least in part, reflects the intended audience of the text. The rationale for the local focus of the text is particularly

clear in cases when the work was written for and dedicated to a patron, as with the original Arabic *Tārīkh-i Qum* (though only the later Persian translation survives), which was written under the patronage of Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād b. al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbbād, *wazīr* to the Buyid Fakhr al-Dawlah b. Rukn al-Dawlah (r. 366–387/976–997), to whom the work was dedicated. In other texts, for which the history of production, transmission, and dissemination is murkier, the rationale for the local orientation is less obvious. Nevertheless, we can at least determine that local histories tend to share this solipsism, in that they do not explicitly engage with other perceived "centers" or "peripheries" of the Islamic empire but are instead focused on their own limited and geographically bounded horizons.

Persianate local histories elucidate regional iterations of a hybrid and multifaceted Perso-Muslim identity. Pre-Islamic Persian identity is not effaced; simultaneously, a Perso-Muslim identity is not compromised. For example, in *Tārīkh-i Qum*, Qummī records the Zoroastrian fire-temples in his city of Qum, a city in which sectors are conspicuously named for its early Arab Muslim settlers from the Ashʿarī tribe. In *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, Ibn Isfandiyār notes the magnanimity of Ṭabaristān's dynastic rulers and the piety of the region's *sayyid*s. Sacred sites, such as Fāṭimah's shrine sanctuary in Qum, transform the soil into sacred ground. These texts simultaneously reach outwards—towards the percieved centers of of the Islamic empire in Iraq, Syria, and Arabia—and also pull inwards towards their own regions on the ostensible peripheries, providing concrete local iterations of universally resonant Islamic themes and priorities. This dialogue within the sources—what Zayde Antrim, in her work on Arabic-language sources, has termed "a discourse of place"— evidences the oblique discussions, definitions, and negotiations about sources of legitimacy and authority across the vast, decentralized, multiethnic, multilingual empire that spread from North Africa, the Arab lands, the Iberian Peninsula, Persia, and Central Asia.[53]

Locally-oriented histories about the Seljuqs of Rūm

Rūm, or Anatolia, was another notable non-Arab periphery of the medieval Islamic empire. Persia and Rūm were Islamized at different times, and the political and social situations in the two regions were different. There is no one definitive or homogenous style of local historical writing from or about Rūm, just as there is no singular unified style of Persianate local historical writing. Nevertheless, comparing contemporaneous Persian-language histories about Rūm with the Persianate local histories we have discussed above allows us to assess one periphery against another and consider how two different regions approached local historical writing within the medieval Islamicate world.

Rūm was Islamized roughly 500 years after Islamization occurred in Iran.[54] Byzantine culture, in the form of Orthodox Christianity and Greek language and culture, was important in the region. Various tribal Turkic peoples gradually entered Anatolia at the beginning of the fifth/ eleventh century, but Islamization was slow. It was only in the seventh/ thirteenth century that Muslim institutions and Sufi orders grew while the Orthodox Church weakened. This coincided with, and was due at least in part to, a series of events that included the Mongol invasions, the subsequent disintegration of Byzantine and Seljuq power in Rūm, and the influx of Turkmen groups into Anatolia.[55] Hillenbrand argues that the influx of Persian Muslim refugees into Anatolia during the Mongol invasions helped to solidify the existence of Muslim religious institutions there. These displaced persons from the Persianate world— including scholars, bureaucrats, and craftsmen—traveled westwards into Rūm, especially Konya, between in the early decades of the seventh/ thirteenth century and were instrumental in forging a new Persianate culture in Rūm, albeit one that differed from the Persianate culture in Iran and Central Asia.[56]

Branches of the Seljuq clan: the Great Seljuqs and the Rūm Seljuqs

The Seljuqs were a Turkic dynasty with multiple offshoots. The branch of the Seljuqs known as the Great Seljuqs, who were based in western Iran and Persian Iraq (or ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam[57]), are the better-documented branch of the Seljuqs; they ruled in Iraq and Iran ca. 421-590/1030–1194.[58] The Great Seljuqs reached their acme with the three most powerful sultans who ruled from 429–485/1039–1092: Tughril Beg, Alp Arslān, and Malik Shāh.[59] The histories of the Great Seljuqs of Iran and Iraq were written and composed by members of the secretarial scribal classes, who wrote in Persian and Arabic. The Great Seljuq sultans had a complicated relationship with the Abbasid Caliphate, and the notion of the Great Seljuqs as the defenders of Sunni orthodoxy in contradistinction to the Shi'i Buyids has been increasingly problematized.[60]

At an early point in the history of the dynasty, the branch of the Seljuq dynasty that ruled Rūm split from the broader family of Seljuqs, and became known as the sultanate of the Seljuqs of Rūm, since Byzantine-influenced Anatolia was known as Rūm. The Great Seljuq Sultanate ruled in Iraq and Iran *ca.* 421-590/1030–1194, whereas the Rūm Seljuqs split off from their relatives and predecessors and ultimately outlasted them, ruling in Anatolia *ca.* 470-707/1077–1307.[61]

Historiography of the Seljuqs of Rūm

There are few very works about the Seljuqs of Rūm who ruled independently of the Great Seljuqs of Iran and Iraq, and this relative dearth becomes especially evident when we consider the sources that exist about the Great Seljuqs.[62] Simply put, the Great Seljuqs of Iran and Iraq are much better documented and appear much more prominently in the extant sources available to us. As Melville notes, the Seljuqs of Rūm hardly feature in the few dynastic histories of the Seljuqs that exist.[63] Local or regional histories in the mold of annalistic Persian local histories, such as *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, and

Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān—all produced between the fifth/eleventh and ninth/early-fifteenth centuries—do not exist for early Islamic Rūm. Likewise, we do not have comparable biographical dictionaries that are akin to the *ṭabaqāt* of, for example, al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, nor do we have conquest narratives akin to *Tārīkh iftitāḥ al-Andalus* or *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbāruhā* from Islamic Spain and Egypt, respectively.

The three historical texts we will consider here are among the few extant works that focus on the Seljuqs of Rūm, and they are all from the seventh/late-thirteenth through eighth/mid-fourteenth centuries.[64] They were written during the decline of the Rūm Seljuqs as well as that of their relatives, the Great Seljuqs ruling further east in Persia and Iraq.[65]

Musāmarāt al-akhbār wa-musāyarat al-akhyār ("Nighttime narratives and keeping up with the good") by Karīm al-Dīn Āqsarāʾī (d. ca. between 723–733/1323–1333), is as close as one might get to the Persianate regional histories (such as that of Ṭabaristān) considered earlier in this essay.[66] Befitting his position as a scribe in the local bureaucracy, Āqsarāʾī's horizon was primarily regional: his history, thin on specific dates, concentrates on Anatolia, which Āqsarāʾī saw within the context of the activities of the powerful Mongol Ilkhanids, who ruled what is now modern day Iran, Turkmenistan, northern Afghanistan, the southern Caucasus, Iraq, and much of Anatolia from 658/1260 to around 735–736/1335.[67]

Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq ("History of the Seljuqs") is an anonymous, and possibly composite, text that records the history of the Seljuqs in a chronological fashion.[68] *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq* was completed in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century (sometime after Muḥarram 765/October 1363) and was composed for Sultan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn b. Seljuq Sulaymānshāh, who was the son of Seljuq Malik Rukn al-Dīn and grandson of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kay-Khusraw b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kay-Qubād.[69] According to the way the anonymous author presents the dynasty, the Seljuqs derived their legitimacy and authority to rule through their prowess as warriors. The author outlines the origins and descendants of the Seljuq dynasty, and then covers the reigns of Sultan ʿAḍud al-Dawlah Abū Shujāʿ Alp Arslān b. Dāwūd[70] and the reign of Sultan Abū'l-Fatḥ Malik Shāh.[71] The author continues in this fashion to cover the reigns of several more sultans,

Khwarazmshāhs, and Abbasid caliphs, up to the era of the Seljuq Sultanate of Rūm with ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kay-Qubād (r. 617–635/1220–1237).[72]

The third text, which is also thin on specific dates, is Ibn Bībī's *Al-Awāmir al-ʿAlāʾiyyah fī'l-umūr al-ʿalāʾiyyah* ("ʿAlāʾī's commands over exalted affairs").73 It lauds the Seljuqs and is a mélange of Seljuq dynastic history and personal memoir, concentrating on the events of the Seljuq Sultanate of Rūm from *ca*. 584/1188 to late 679/early 1281. Related to this text is *Mukhtaṣar-i Saljūqnāmah*, which is an anonymous Persian abridgment of Ibn Bībī's *Awāmir al-ʿAlāʾiyyah*, which was also written in Persian.[74] Ibn Bībī (d. after 684/1285 or 687/1288) was a scribe (*munshī*) in the Khwarazmian court, and he wrote his history at the behest of ʿAṭā-Malik Juvaynī, the governor of Baghdad.[75] Despite the fact that the Seljuqs of Rūm had already declined and the powerful Mongol Empire was already a dominant force, Ibn Bībī framed the Seljuqs of Rūm as legitimate rulers to whom the Great Seljuqs gave independent rule over provincial domains in Anatolia.[76]

Characteristics of Rūm sources: Seljuq descent and dynastic identity

The seventh/thirteenth- and eighth/fourteenth-century dynastic chronicles about the Seljuqs of Rūm focus on the construction of dynastic legitimacy and couch claims to legitimacy in terms of military success, Seljuq genealogy, the meritorious activities of the Rūm Seljuq sultans, the regional importance of Konya (the de facto capital of Rūm), and the virtues of kingly rule. Hailing from the Seljuq lineage is itself a source of legitimacy. Being connected to Seljuq ancestors confers legitimacy, not because the Seljuqs are links to an earlier dynasty, but because Seljuq descent is itself a source of the right to rule.

In both Rūm and the Persianate world, issues of legitimacy, autonomy, and the right to rule were highly significant. Local authorities and rulers were important agents in the administration of regions, which lay hundreds or thousands of miles from the theoretical seat of imperial power in Baghdad, where the Abbasid caliph resided. Using dynastic sources as a heuristic device permits us to ask why dynastic concerns

feature so prominently as a mode of claiming religio-political legitimacy in Rūm sources, and why this is not the case in roughly contemporary Persianate sources.

Sources from and about Rūm evidence allegiance to the ruling but outgoing Seljuq dynasty as it gave way to the Mongol Empire. Whereas the authors of Persianate local histories of Bukhara, Qum, Ṭabaristān, and Bayhaq demonstrate a loyalty to the land and physical environment, local religious practices, local patrician families, and notable local individuals, as well as claiming various *faḍā'il* that make the city or region meritorious—including genealogies, dreams, etymologies, and lore—that are characteristic of early Islamic Persian local histories, claims to legitimacy in Rūm Seljuq dynastic histories and chronicles are largely genealogically-based.

Descent from Seljuq progenitors formed a claim to legitimacy for the Seljuqs of Rūm in contradistinction to the ways in which genealogy and the prestige and legitimacy derived from it manifests itself in Persianate local histories. In the Persianate local histories, it is a broader array of types of descent and connection that tethers the Persian locations and communities to the legacy of the Prophet. *Sayyid*s, *sharīf*s, Alids, and early Arab settlers from the ranks of the *ṣaḥābah* created living connections to the Prophet. Genealogies that included Persians in Arab lineages—be they sacred, invented, or based on the *mawlā* relationship of clientage—established powerful relationships that included but extended beyond the purely biological. In Rūm Seljuq dynastic histories and chronicles, claims to legitimacy are genealogically based, with descent from the Seljuqs being the fundamental mode of legitimation.

Descent from the Seljuq dynasty and allegiance to the Rūm Seljuq Sultanate

If Persianate local histories are characterized by a constellation of literary devices that use various merits to bring Persia and Persians into the central narrative of Islamic history while simultaneously maintaining their strongly local tenor, then historical writing from Rūm is charac-

terized by a focus on Seljuq heritage and affiliation with the Rūm Seljuq Sultanate. Melville agrees with Cahen's earlier assessment that the chronicles of Ibn Bībī, Karīm al-Dīn Āqsarā'ī, and the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq* are linked to the development of a local identity in Anatolia that is characterized by a clear allegiance to the declining Rūm Seljuq Sultanate during the period of increasing Mongol power when all three authors were active.[77]

Peacock argues that it was during the seventh/thirteenth century—when our major sources from Rūm were composed—that Seljuq descent became an important source of legitimacy for the Seljuqs of Rūm.[78] In their use of titulature, it was the Great Seljuqs of Iran and Iraq, and not the rulers of Byzantium, that the Seljuqs of Rūm emulated.[79] However, Seljuq descent was not the sole factor that conferred legitimacy. Kinship through blood and marriage to other genealogical lines could be legitimating factors for the Seljuqs, just as they were elsewhere in the Islamic world. The Kingdom of Georgia and the Seljuqs of Rūm formed an alliance —complete with a marriage between a Seljuq sultan and a member of the Georgian Bagratid dynasty—in the seventh/thirteenth century as a bulwark against the Mongol threat, and the Rūm Seljuqs likely derived prestige through their association with the ruling Georgian Bagratids.[80] Additionally, not every dynasty claimed to derive their legitimacy on a genealogical basis through descent from the eponymous Seljuq ancestor.[81]

Reasons for differences between Persianate local histories and sources from Rūm

Charles Melville has convincingly argued that the general paucity of Islamic historical writing about the Seljuqs of Rūm is due at least in part to circumstances in Anatolia that were unfavorable to the production of such writing. Specifically, Greek and Orthodox Christian culture was only slowly replaced over the course of centuries by Islamic structures of learning and governance; initial colonization was not by settled Persians or Arabs but primarily by Turkmen nomads; Byzantine forces long resisted Muslim incursions; and boundaries between the Byzantines and

incoming Turkmens frequently shifted and were in flux.[82] All of these factors contributed to a relative lack of historical writing in Rūm, as well as the differences between Persianate and Rūm local historical writing.

Persianate local histories and the histories of Rūm also reflect differences in audience. The Seljuq histories were written for the court. Consequently, they valorize, memorialize, and reference events, individuals, and genealogies that are of relevance to the Seljuqs and their court. The anonymous author of *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq*, for example, is concerned with the heroic deeds of the Seljuqs and their *dawlah*. It is the Seljuqs and not the land of Rūm, per se, that is important. *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq* valorizes the Seljuqs as brave and skilled warriors, which forms the basis of their qualifications and legitimacy as rulers of Rūm.

In contrast, Persian local histories, though they may be composed for consumption at court, also target an audience that was largely urban. The texts are concerned with the land, soil, and physicality of the local territory. *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, and *Tārīkh-i Qum* are concerned with the history of their lands and the human and natural virtues that constitute the history of the region. *Tārīkh-i Qum*, for example, documents in detail the areas of the city named after the Arabs who settled the region. In *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, a dream in which the Prophet appears in the city's bazaar sanctifies the very land and soil of Bukhara, as do and the sacred etymologies adduced in the history.

Moreover, while I argue that Persianate historical writing evidences various characteristics, trends, and identities, these local identities do not preclude other, larger, geographically-bounded identities. To this end, A. C. S. Peacock has recently argued that local identity coexisted simultaneously with a broader "Khurasani patriotism" during this same period.[83] It is therefore more productive to think of identities and loyalties in terms of overlapping and partially nested concentric circles: a geographically-bounded connection to one's town or region, such as Bayhaq or Qum, might coexist alongside other allegiances, such as perhaps being part of Khurasan, in the case of Bayhaq, or having strong ties to Ashʿarī Arabs, Alids, *sayyid*s, and *sharīf*s, in the case of Qum. Identity and alle-

giance were not exclusive but instead expanded or contracted according to circumstance and context.

The absence in Rūm sources of ties to physical places, particularly as *faḍāʾil* or as local places of interest, curiosity, or significance, is especially noticeable when compared to Persianate local histories. The colonization of Rūm primarily by Turkmen nomads goes a significant way to explaining some of the differences in the culture of writing between the settled scribal classes in Persian cities versus Seljuq Rūm, where a great influx of Turkmen migrated into Anatolia from the steppes. In addition, the tendency of Turks to form their power base in the countryside without establishing a permanent court was another contributing factor to the major differences between Persianate sources and writing in or about Rūm. This contrasts with the situation in Persianate areas, such as Qum, which was settled by Ashʿarī Arabs during the first/seventh century. The inhabitants of Qum were sedentary and traced their lineage back to the Ashʿarī Arabs, naming the *mīdān*s of the city after these Arabs and closely identifying the physical land of Qum with this earlier Islamic Arab heritage.

In addition to these early patterns of conquest, migration, or settlement by Arabs in Persia, Persian dynasts based themselves around urban centers. The Persian *dihqān* class of landed gentry held power in the countryside, but the court was nevertheless a settled and urban phenomenon. This is in contradistinction to the Turks, who retained strong affiliations with their nomadic heritage and negotiated complex relationships with the nomadic Turkmen.

Complex urban-nomadic relationships for the Seljuqs of Rūm

This is not to suggest that life was entirely nomadic in Seljuq Rūm. Peacock, who has described the complex relationship between the Seljuqs of Rūm and the nomadic peoples within Rūm over whom they ruled, documented an urbanized Persianate culture that began to develop and thrive from the late-sixth/twelfth century onwards, one that was albeit

distinct from the Persianate culture that manifests itself in the histories from what is now Iran and Central Asia we have discussed above such as *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, and *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*. Konya was the capital and center of urban development, with a high-point of urban palace building in the early-seventh/thirteenth century during the reign of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kay-Qubād I (r. 616–634/1219–1237).[84]

A bifurcation in culture between the urbanized Rūm Seljuqs (the Turks) versus the nomads within their domains (the Turkmens) is probably overly simplistic. Peacock proposes that even at the height of their dynastic rule in the early-seventh/thirteenth century, the Rūm Seljuqs maintained close contact with at least some Turkmen groups.[85] Konya was not an exclusive capital, since the court was itinerant, but it was a center of gravity and a royal dynastic burial ground for the Rūm Seljuqs and their court as they traveled through their realms in contact with their Turkmen subjects.[86] The boundary between the urban domain and the *ūj* or *aṭrāf*—the domain of the nomadic Turkmen—was a porous and complexly negotiated one.[87] For the Great Seljuqs of Iran and Iraq, like the Seljuqs of Rūm, the court was a peripatetic phenomenon.[88] Consequently, Rūm sources focus on tribal elements and dynastic legitimation, in contrast to the Persianate sources that tend to focus on the city as the unit of measure.

With the major exception of Tabriz, which became a *de facto* capital for the Great Seljuqs of Iran and Iraq, the Turks tended to live in tents, not in cities, and they did not establish a permanent court.[89] The Great Seljuqs favored Tabriz, but they did not establish a permanent court even there, which ultimately meant that Tabriz would not become a permanent metropolis with an established cultural apparatus, a "cultural magnet" like Baghdad or Cairo.[90]

There were other factors that account for the differences in the culture of Islamicate writing in the Persianate local histories and those about Seljuq Rūm. Greek and Orthodox Christian culture persisted and were only slowly replaced by Islamic institutions of governance and learning such as the *madrasah*, and during the protracted period of religio-cultural transition as the Byzantines resisted the Turkic invasions, the

borders shifted.[91] Anatolia retained a Christian population, particularly in central and inland Anatolia, where there remained a substantial Christian element, and Seljuq sultans in Anatolia married Greek and Georgian princesses.[92]

While Persianate local histories and Seljuq Rūm sources are contemporary, Islamization had occurred much earlier and very differently in Persia. In contrast to Rūm, Persian lands were generally less nomadic and had more settled populations of villages and cities. The Arab armies that invaded Persia came within the first few decades of the Muslim conquests. By the fourth/tenth century, an urban Persianate Muslim civilization flourished, and perhaps by 400/1000 the majority of Persians had in some substantive way converted to Islam.[93]

During the fourth/tenth to ninth/early-fifteenth centuries, further demographic and cultural shifts took place in Persia. The center of intellectual and political gravity within Islam moved eastward into Persia from its former basis in Arab territories in Arabia, Syria, and Iraq, and a major revival occurred in Persian cultural and literary production. Persians—the famed Saʿdī and Ferdowsī, among others—could write in the blossoming New Persian language without their Muslim identity necessarily being called into question. Rapidly growing cities in Persia were focal points of intellectual, religious, and cultural activity. Local dynasties rose to prominence and power in Khurasan.[94]

The Persianate local histories examined in this essay were written at the time of the rise of local dynasties in Khurasan. Local dynasts and governors, who ruled as *amīr*s on behalf of the Abbasid caliphate, used these literary forms in order to maintain the fine balance of local authority and legitimacy that was simultaneously nominally or actually subordinate to Abbasid power and was situated within the religio-political framework of the broader Muslim *ummah*. Nevertheless, what was locally important was not necessarily globally significant.

Sources from the peripheries in the Persianate world and Rūm were not the only works to claim their importance and centrality. Histories from and about Baghdad—the political and symbolic heart of the caliphate—also asserted time and again the centrality and importance of the

city. Writing about the city of Baghdad and focusing on Arabic-language literature from the medieval period, Cooperson has argued that descriptions of Baghdad incorporate a persistent and recurrent set of *topoi* that refer to Baghdad and to the broader corpus of literary descriptions about urban life.[95] Antrim has argued that claims about Baghdad's centrality connected the city to the *ummah* throughout time and legitimized Baghdad.[96] Regardless of whether these claims were repeated tropes or were distinct and variable, it is clear that the dynamics of power were multilayered and multidirectional, and cities and regions simultaneously constituted and were constituted by their representations in written sources.[97]

Conclusions and implications

Given the heterogeneous nature of the sources themselves, analyzing Persianate local histories is, by definition, a comparative exercise. These histories were composed over a span of several centuries in different regions. They were composed at a geographic and cultural remove from the notional center of the empire in Baghdad during an era marked by the rise of local dynasties (such as the Buyids during the fourth/tenth century), when Abbasid power was decentralized and stretched across vast areas with multiple regional foci across Persianate lands.

The authors, editors, compilers and translators who produced these texts wrote at multiple registers for both perceived and real audiences. Sometimes, when a text exists only in a later translation, as is the case with *Tārīkh-i Qum*, it is difficult if not impossible to tell where the editor or translator may have shifted the tenor, tone, content, or emphasis of the text to speak to one of many audiences that the text may have reached at different times and places.

The disparate constellation of texts collectively considered annalistic Persianate local histories are linked in their tendency to position their communities to better fit into the scope of Islamic history by resonating with both globally Islamic and regionally specific Persian themes.

Therefore, these texts simultaneously respond to and challenge assumptions about the centrality of Arabs, Arabic, Arabia, Iraq, Syria, *ṣaḥābah*, *tābiʿūn*, Alids, *sayyid*s, and *sharīf*s while at the same claiming their own importance within these same frameworks. Persian local histories are characterized by the use of myriad literary strategies to claim religio-political authority, including dream narratives; emphasis on *ṣaḥābah*, *tābiʿūn*, *sayyid*s, *sharīf*s, and other associates or descendants of Muḥammad, sometimes as *ḥadīth* transmitters who lived and taught in the region as living virtues (*faḍāʾil*) and custodians of the faith; and foundation narratives or etymologies that embed the city or region into pivotal moments in Islamic history or link it to prophetic authority. Legitimating dreams; records of the sayings, teachings, and burial places of notables, *imām*s, descendants and associates of Muḥammad; physical marvels and virtues of the land; and glorious etymologies all bring the prestige of religious sanction to these locales.

In contrast, the histories about the Rūm Seljuqs were conditioned by the contexts of their production, which during the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries was dominated by the Mongol invasions and its aftermath and consequences.[98] As the Byzantine foci of power gave way first to the Turkic Seljuqs and then to the Mongols, authors confronted how to recount, represent, and frame their past and present both to themselves and to others. The originally nomadic Turkic tribesmen who invaded and Islamized Rūm were not bound to the land in the way that Persian authors were, and consequently historical writing from Seljuq Rūm is not tied to the land in the way that Persianate sources are. We do not see the standard sections on wonders and marvels of the land, or the emphasis on the virtues of the land and its denizens, which occur in Persianate local histories. Rather, there is a heavier focus on the warrior heroism of the Seljuqs, which confers legitimacy on the dynasty. Annalistic Persian local histories do not form a neatly regimented whole. Given the unevenness of the genre of Persian language local histories, comparisons with locally-oriented historical writing about Rūm—another periphery—draw out the distinctive characteristics of medieval Islamic Persianate local histories.

Notes

All digital content cited in this article was last accessed via the URLs provided in the notes below on December 22, 2020.

1. For bibliography and discussion of the secondary literature on the concept of "Iran," see Sarah Bowen Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Ch. 1, esp. 8–12. See also Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 161–162, 376. On the concept of Iran and Iranian identity, especially during the Sasanian period, see Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origin* (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1989). More recently, Touraj Daryaee explores the concept of Īrānshahr and its boundaries and borders (particularly in the form of rivers and walls as physical barriers) during the Sasanian period in "The Idea of the Sacred Land of Eranshahr," in R. Strootman & M. J. Versluys (eds.), *Persianism in Antiquity* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2017), 393–399. For an overview of the literature, see also Mimi Hanaoka, *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), Ch. 2.

2. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, translated by Abū Naṣr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qubawī and abridged by Muḥammad b. Zufar b. ʿUmar. Ed. Mudarris Razavī (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Iran, 1972). An English translation is available as *The History of Bukhara, Translated from a Persian Abridgement of the Arabic Original by Narshakhī*, ed. and trans. Richard N. Frye (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1954).

3. Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Zayd al-Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, ed. Aḥmad Bahmanyār (2nd ed.; Tehran: Muʾassas va-Mudīr-i Bungāh-i Dānesh, 1965). See Julie S. Meisami, "History as Literature," in Charles Melville (ed.), *Persian Historiography* (A History of Persian Literature 10; London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 209.

4. Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, translated by Tāj al-Dīn Ḥasan b. Bahāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī Qummī. Ed. Muḥammad Riḍā Anṣārī Qummī (Qum: Kitābkhānah-i Buzurg-i Ḥazrat-i Āyat Allāh al-ʿUẓmā Marʿashī Najafī, 2006). See Ann K. S. Lambton, "An Account of the Tarikhi Qumm," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12 (1948): 586–596. Lambton's important early study of the work summarizes the history of the text.

5. Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, ed. ʿAbbas Iqbal (2 vols.; Tehran: Muḥammad Ramazani, 1941). An abridged English translation is available as *Abridged Translation of the History of Tabaristan Compiled about A.H. 613 (A.D. 1216) by Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Isfandiyar, Based on the India Office Ms. Compared with Two Mss. in the British Museum*, trans. Edward G. Browne (Leiden: Brill, 1905).

6. Qubawī extended the history covered to the year 365/975. The Persian translation was then abridged in 574/1178–9 by Muḥammad b. Zufar b. ʿUmar, who also added to the work from other texts. See *History of Bukhara*, ed. and trans. Frye, xii. The Samanid *amīr* Manṣūr b. Nūḥ commissioned Balʿamī's *Tārīkhnāmā*, ostensibly an abridged Persian translation of Ṭabarī's fourth/tenth-century Arabic *Tārīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk* ("History of Prophets and Kings"). On the original nature of Balʿamī's *Tārīkhnāmā* and a reconstruction of the politics of the Samanid court based in Bukhara, see A.C. S. Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Balʿamī's Tārikhnāma* (London: Routledge, 2007). On translation movements as a mode of storing up a dynasty's legitimacy, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), 29, 45. See also Peacock, *Medieval Islamic Historiography*, 169.

7. For biographical information, see D. M. Dunlop, "al-Bayhaḳī, Ẓahīr al-Dīn Abū 'l-Ḥasanʿ Alī b. Zayd b. Funduḳ," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005), s.v. See also Meisami, "History as Literature," 209.

8. The editor, Muḥammad Riḍā Anṣārī Qummī, states that the extant manuscripts of the Persian translation of *Tārīkh-i Qum* he has seen origi-

nate from two sources. The manuscripts on which the text is based have some special characteristics, including numerous letter substitutions, which the printed edition retains, along with the occasional use of Arabic words instead of Persian ones, and variant spellings of proper nouns. Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, 4, 60–61, 63–67. See also Lambton, "An Account of the Tarikhi Qumm."

9. On the historiography of the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, see Nicola Clarke, *The Muslim Conquest of Iberia: Medieval Arabic Narratives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

10. For a detailed treatment of this argument, see Hanaoka, *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography*.

11. Mimi Hanaoka, "Perspectives from the Peripheries: Strategies for 'Centering' Persian Histories from the 'Peripheries,'" *Journal of Persianate Studies* 8 (2015): 1–22.

12. For the etymologies, see Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, 39–52.

13. Ibid., 269–270.

14. Ibid., 278.

15. The *miʿrāj* is often understood as an event to which multiple qurʾānic passages allude, and it is treated extensively in the exegetical and mystical traditions within Islam.

16. Ibid., 51. The editor translates *mirfaq* as *āranj*, meaning elbows.

17. Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, 51.

18. The term "elaboration of memory" is from Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 112. Smith discusses Christian myth and reconstructions of visits to the Holy Land through ritual experience.

19. I add "buried here," since this is occurring on the Day of the Resurrection and Final Judgment, when the bodily resurrection of all people would occur. I take the 70,000 martyrs who will appear on the Day of Resurrection in Bukhara to be 70,000 martyrs who were buried there.

20. This is Frye's translation. *The History of Bukhara*, ed. and trans. Frye, 21–22; Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 30–32.

21. Richard Nelson Frye, "Notes on the History of Transoxiana,"

Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 19 (1956): 106–125. He also included some corrections to his *History of Bukhara*. See also, W. Barthold and R. N. Frye, "Bukhārā," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005), s.v.

22. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.56; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 14.

23. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.56–58; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 14–16.

24. On concepts of Persia, Persianness, and memories of the pre-Islamic and proto-Islamic past, see Sarah Bowen Savant, "Isaac as the Persians' Ishmael: Pride and the Pre-Islamic Past in Medieval Islam," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 2 (2006): 5–25.

25. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.122; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 73–74.

26. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.122–125; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 74–76.

27. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.125–130; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 76–80.

28. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.130–135; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 80–85.

29. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.135–137; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 85–86.

30. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.130; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 80.

31. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.137; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 86.

32. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.137; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 87.

33. D. G. Tor, "The Long Shadow of Pre-Islamic Iranian Rulership: Antagonism or Assimilation?" in Teresa Bernheimer and Adam Silverstein (eds.), *Late Antiquity: Eastern Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2012), 145–163. "To say that the 'Islamic ideal of rulership' was in conflict with the Iranian ideal that was actively embraced and absorbed into Islamic culture from the Abbasid era onwards is simply not accurate... In short, the Iranian

ideal saved the Islamic polity at a crucial moment, when the caliphate had failed and was in the process of collapse; it was one of the two legitimising factors—the other being the *jihād*—that was able to turn mere amīrs, or military commanders, into Sultans—legitimate political authorities. The essential reason why the Iranian ideal was revived, reshaped, and given a new lease on life was precisely the lack of a viable mainstream Islamic ideal after the ideological implosion that followed on the heels of the Abbasid failure" (163). See also Tor, "The Islamising of Iranian Kingly Ideals in the Persianate Fürstenspiegel," *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 49 (2011): 15–22.

34. Parvaneh Pourshariati, "Local Histories of Khurasan and the Pattern of Arab Settlement," *Studia Iranica* 27 (1998): 64–66; see also Charles Melville, "Introduction," in idem (ed.), *Persian Historiography*, 145–146.

35. Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Saʿd writes: "And Muḥammad b. ʿUmar said: al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās did not live [in] Mecca, and neither did he live in Medina, and he engaged with military expeditions with the Prophet, and he returned to the country of his tribe (*qawmihi*) and he settled in the al-Bādiyyah area near Basra and would go often to Basra, and the people of Basra spoke about him. The rest of his children were in the al-Bādiyyah [area] of Basra and a tribe descended [in] Basra." Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar (11 vols.; Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), 5:160–162, no. 821.

36. Seyyed Mohammad Seyyedi, "ʿAbbās b. Mirdās," *Encyclopaedia Islamica* (Leiden: Brill, 2008–), s.v.; Renate Jacobi, "Mukhaḍram," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005), s.v.

37. According to Seyyedi, his *kunyah* is given either as Abū'l-Faḍl or Abū'l-Haytham. His great-grandfather's name is Abū ʿĀmir or Abū Ghālib b. Rifāʿah b. Ḥārithah. This information is found in Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1983), 263; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Al-Istīʿāb fī maʿrifat al-aṣḥāb* (Cairo: n.p., n.d.), 2.817; and al-Marzubānī, *Muʿjam al-shuʿarāʾ* (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1960), 102. Régis Blachère estimates that ʿAbbās was born around 570 CE: see *Histoire de la littérature arabe* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1952), 274–275. Abū ʿUbaydah

identifies al-Khansāʾ, the famous female Arab poet, as his mother (cited in Abūʾl-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* [Beirut : Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1956], 14.285, 301). On the other hand, some sources claim that al-Khansāʾ was the mother of all of Mirdās's children except for al-ʿAbbās; see, e.g., Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *Simṭ al-laʾālī* [Beirut: n.p., n.d.], 1.32. See Seyyedi, "Al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās."

38. ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834), *The Life of Muhammad; A Translation of Isḥaq's* [sic] Sīrat Rasūl Allah. Trans. A. Guillaume (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1967), 594–595.

39. Seyyedi cites al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqaẓah, 1997), 1.629 and Khalīfah b. Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (n.p., n.d.), 1.75–76 on the *zakāt* and al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās, *Dīwān al-ʿAbbās ibn Mirdās al-Sulamī*, ed. Yaḥyā al-Jubūrī (Baghdad: Dār al-Jumhūriyyah, 1968), 24, for ʿAbbās being an envoy to al-Bādiyyah. Seyyedi, "Al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās."

40. Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, 5.160–162, no. 821.

41. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī: Jamʿ jawāmiʿ al-aḥādīth waʾl-asānīd wa-makniz al-ṣiḥāḥ waʾl-sunan waʾl-masānīd* (2 vols.; Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Jamʿiyyat al-Maknaz al-Islāmī, 2000), 977 (*kitāb al-manāqib* 60, no. 4239): *mā min aḥad min aṣḥābī yamūtu bi-arḍin illa buʿitha qāʾidan wa-nūran lahum yawm al-qiyāmah*.

42. Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, 22.

43. Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, 22.

44. The work of Kazuo Morimoto and Teresa Bernheimer on the Alids (Bernheimer) and "sayyido-sharifology" (Morimoto) and genealogies of the Prophet's family provide the basis for my definition of these terms. See Kazuo Morimoto, "Toward the Formation of Sayyido-Sharifology: Questioning Accepted Fact," *Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 22 (2004): 87–103; ibid. (ed.), *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet* (London: Routledge, 2012); Teresa Bernheimer, *The ʿAlids: The First Family of Islam, 750–1200* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

45. Bernheimer, *The ʿAlids*, 2–4.

46. Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, 256–280. On the Shi'i *imāms* see, for exam-

ple, 259–262, 266, 269, 277, 279; on Iblīs, 259; on the angel Gabriel, 261–262; on Muḥammad, 259–280.

47. B. Lewis, "ʿAlī al-Riḍā, Abu 'l-Ḥasan b. Mūsā b. D̲jaʿfar," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005), s.v.

48. Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, 573.

49. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.94–106; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 47–58.

50. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.73; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 27.

51. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, 1.120; *Abridged Translation*, trans. Browne, 70.

52. Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, 29, 104, 249–255. Fire temples are used in the Zoroastrian religion, which was predominant in Iran during the pre-Islamic era.

53. Zayde Antrim offers a detailed discussion of early Muslim attitudes toward lands and homelands and the conceptual framework of what she terms "a discourse of place," in *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

54. The history of pre- and early Islamic Anatolia is difficult to untangle, and I make no attempt here to reconstruct a chronology of Islamization in Rūm. This analysis relies heavily on the work on Turkic, Anatolian, Rūm, and Seljuq history undertaken by C. E. Bosworth, Peter Golden, David Durand-Guedy, Carole Hillenbrand, Charles Melville, Julie S. Meisami, Songül Mecit, Andrew Marsham, A. C. S. Peacock, Sara Nur Yildiz, and, in an earlier generation, by C. A. Storey and Claude Cahen. Major standard studies by the earlier generation include Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: A General Survey of the Material and Spiritual Culture and History c. 1071–1330*, trans. J. Jones-Williams (New York: Taplinger, 1968); idem, *The Formation of Turkey: The Seljukid Sultanate of Rūm: Eleventh to Fourteenth Century*, ed. and trans. P. M. Holt (New York: Longman, 2001); idem, *La Turquie pré-ottomane* (Istanbul: Dıvıt Matbaacılık ve Yayıncılık, 1988); Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey* (5 vols. in 12; London: Luzac & Co., 1927–1971 [incomplete]). Peacock offers voluminous and exemplary work on Anatolia and Seljuq history, including Peacock,

Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation (New York: Routledge, 2010); idem, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Balʿamī's Tārikhnāma* (London: Routledge, 2007). See also Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009). Peacock and Yildiz (eds.), *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013) is a rich volume of edited essays that focuses on Seljuq Anatolia from the sixth/late-twelfth through seventh/late-thirteenth centuries. Bosworth has authored numerous works on Iranian dynasties that are relevant when trying to piece together the chronology of events in Anatolia. See also Hillenbrand, "Aspects of the Court of the Great Seljuqs," in Christian Lange and Songül Mecit (eds.), *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 22–38; eadem, *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Melville, "Anatolia under the Mongols," in Kate Fleet (ed.), *Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 51–101; Meisami, "Rāvandī's Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr: History or Hybrid?" *Edebiyât* (n.s.) 5 (1994): 181–215; eadem, "Why Write History in Persian? Historical Writing in the Samanid Period," in Hillenbrand (ed.), *Studies in Honor of Clifford Edmund Bosworth, II: The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 348–374; Mecit, *The Rum Seljuqs: Evolution of a Dynasty* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014); Lange and Mecit (eds.), *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014). For a summary of the secondary literature, see Hanaoka, *Authority and Identity*, Ch. 9.

55. Speros Vryonis Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971). See also R. Stephen Humphrey's assessment of Vryonis's chronology of the Islamization in Anatolia in *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 279–281.

56. Carole Hillenbrand, "Rāvandī, the Seljuk Court at Konya and the Persianization of Anatolian Cities," in Gary Leiser (ed.), *Les Seldjoukides d'Anatolie* (Paris: Editions Hêrodotos, 2005), 157–169, esp. 162–169.

57. Al-ʿIrāq al-ʿAǰamī ("Persian Iraq") was distinguished from al-ʿIrāq al-ʿArabī ("Arab ʿIrāq"). Al-ʿIrāq al-ʿAǰamī or Persian Iraq referred to the mountainous, western portion of Persia, formerly known as Māh (Māda, Media). Al-ʿIrāq al-ʿArabī or Arab ʿIrāq referred to Lower Mesopotamia. See C. Edmund Bosworth, "ʿERĀQ-E ʿAJAM(Ī)," *Encyclopædia Iranica* (https://iranicaonline.org/articles/eraq-e-ajami; originally published December 15, 1998); L. Lockhart, "J̌ibāl," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005), s.v.

58. Carole Hillenbrand, "Some Reflections on Seljuq Historiography," in Antony Eastmond (ed.), *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, March 1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate-Variorum, 2001), 73–88.

59. On the Great Seljuqs, see the chapters by Bosworth, Lambton, and Bausani in J. A. Boyle (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 1968). See also Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 119–139 and idem, *The Formation of Turkey*, 47–71.

60. For example, see Deborah G. Tor, "A Tale of Two Murders: Power Relations between Caliph and Sultan in the Saljūq Era," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 159 (2009): 279–297.

61. Hillenbrand, "Some Reflections on Seljuq Historiography," 73–88.

62. For a treatment of the court history of the Seljuq Empire in Iran and Iraq (ca. 432–590/1040–1194) written in Arabic and Persian, see Peacock, "Court Historiography of the Seljuq Empire in Iran and Iraq: Reflections on Content, Authorship and Language," *Iranian Studies* 47 (2014): 327–345. Peacock analyzes the historical writing that was focused on the activities of the Great Seljuqs and their successors, the Seljuq Sultanate of Iraq; these sources were primarily written by bureaucrats who were associated with the court about which they wrote.

63. Charles Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," in Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn (eds.), *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 135–166.

64. For an overview of literatures in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish from Anatolia during the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries and new scholarly approaches to these literatures, see Peacock and Yildiz, "Introduction: Literature, Language and History in Late Medieval Anatolia," in Peacock and Yildiz (eds.), *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2016), 19–48.

65. These sources are also valuable for understanding the role of the Khwarazmshāh and what happened to the sultanate of Rūm after the Mongol invasions. Kōzō Itani, "Mongoru shin'nyū-go no rūmu: Kyōdai-kan no surutan-i arasoi o megutte [The Rūm Sultanate after the Mongol Invasion]," *Tōyōshi Kenkyu* 39 (1980): 358–387. See also Itani, "Rūmu sarutanato to horazumushā [The Rūm Sultanate and the Khwārazmshāh]," *Tōyōshi Kenkyu* 47 (1988): 116–149.

66. Karīm al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad Āqsarāʾī, *Tārīkh-i Salājiqah, yā Musāmarāt al-akhbār wa-musāyarat al-akhyār* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāṭīr, 1362 [1983-1984]).

67. "Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," 135–166.

68. Although the anonymity of the text complicates the issue, the text was composed for one of the last Seljuq sultans. *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq dar Ānātūlī*, ed. Nādirah Jalālī (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Mīrāth-i Maktūb, Āyinah-i Mīrāth: 1999).

69. *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq*, 40.

70. *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq*, 49–51.

71. *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq*, 51–73.

72. *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq*, 74–78.

73. Nāṣir al-Dīn Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Ibn Bībī, *Akhbār-i Salājiqah-i Rūm, bā matn-i kāmil-i Saljūqnāmah-i Ibn Bībī, jāmiʿ-i maṭālib-i tārīkhī-i kitāb-i Al-Awāmir al-ʿAlāʾiyyah fī'l-umūr al-ʿalāʾiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad Javād Mashkūr (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Tihrān, 1971). This 1971 Tehran edition edited by Mashkūr is a reprint of the 1902 edition published in Leiden by Brill and is also known as *Mukhtaṣar-i Saljūqnāmah*.

74. Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," 135–166. On Ibn Bībī, see also Mecit, *The Rum Seljuq*s, xxxi–xxxii.

75. Juvaynī had a relative who had been Ibn Bībī's father's patron. Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," 135–166. Anooshahr covers Ibn Bībī and his *Awāmir al-ʿAlāʾiyyah* in Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 110–117. See also 13, 100, 136, 143, 147, 148, and 151.

76. Mecit, *The Rum Seljuqs*, 23–29.

77. Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," 135.

78. Later dynasties, including the Ottomans and Karamanids, argued that they were successors to the Seljuqs through claims of real and mythological descent. Peacock, "Seljuq Legitimacy in Islamic History," in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society, and Culture*, 81–82, 86–92.

79. Korobeinikov dates the emergence of Rūm Seljuq titles to the sixth/mid-twelfth century, *ca.* 551/1156. The title of the Rūm Seljuq Sultan Qilich Arslān II (r. 551–588/1156–1192), who styled himself as a sultan with rule limited to Anatolia, refers to some of the titles used by the Great Seljuq Sultan Malikshāh, instead of using titulature that would indicate that he was a successor to the Byzantines. Rūm Seljuq Sultan ʿIzz al-Dīn Kay-Kawūs I (r. 608–616/1211–1219) claimed the title *malik al-mashriq wa'l-maghrib* ("King of the East and West") and "Lord of the Arabs and Persians," styling himself in the model of the Great Seljuqs of Iran and Iraq, who used such titles. Dimitri Korobeinikov, "'The King of the East and the West': The Seljuk Dynastic Concept and Titles in the Muslim and Christian Sources," in *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, 68–90. In this, the Seljuqs of Rūm were not alone: the Mamluk ruler Baybars also adopted symbols of Seljuq power—though the Great Seljuqs were by then far past the acme of the their rule—such as the *nawbah* drum band and *chatr* parasol, as physical symbols of his legitimacy as a ruler. Peacock, "Seljuq Legitimacy in Islamic History," 82–84.

80. Peacock, "Georgia and the Anatolian Turks in the 12th and 13th Centuries," *Anatolian Studies* 56 (2006): 127–146. In this case, sometime in the second quarter of the seventh/thirteenth century, the Georgian queen Rusudan (r. 620–645/1223–1247) married a Seljuq, the son of Mughīth al-Dīn Tughril-Shāh of Erzurum, who converted to Christianity

when the Georgians balked at having a Turkish Muslim king.

81. The Dānishmendids and Saltukids—rivals of the Seljuqs of Rūm—ruled without claiming Seljuq descent as the basis of their legitimacy. Peacock, "Seljuq Legitimacy in Islamic History," 81–82.

82. Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," 135–166.

83. For a recent study that examines two partially preserved Khurasani histories, see A. C. S. Peacock, "Khurasani Historiography and Identity in the Light of the Fragments of the *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān* and the *Tārīkh-i Harāt*," in A. C. S. Peacock and D. G. Tor (eds.), *Medieval Central Asia and the Persianate World: Iranian tradition and Islamic Civilisation* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 143–160. Peacock examines the fourth/tenth century *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān* ("History of the Governors of Khurasan," no longer extant in its entirety but preserved through quotations in other works, and which Peacock considers a composite work written by three members of the same family) and the sixth/twelfth century *Tārīkh-i Harāt* (which survives in fragmentary form). Peacock argues that local identity exited simultaneously with a broader Khurasani identity: "These works suggest that local allegiances to one's own town could co-exist with a broader sense of Khurasani patriotism. The *Tārīkh-i Harāt*, however, is also characterized by a distinct anti-Iraqi sentiment, testimony not just to the political and cultural fissures that rent the Seljuq Empire but also to this distinct sense of Khurasani identity that had developed since the region's incorporation into the Arab empire and evidently survived to the eve of the Mongol invasions" (144–145). Put another way, "The regional identities that Sarah Savant, on the basis of works down to the fifth/ eleventh century, observed as pre-eminent, continued to dominate into the sixth/ twelfth century. However, even to describe them as regional is somewhat misleading: these texts give no sense that Khurasan was part of a larger Iran" (154).

84. Peacock, "Court and Nomadic Life in Saljuq Anatolia," in David Durand-Guedy (ed.), *Turko-Mongol Rulers, Cities and City Life* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 191–222, esp. 193–197.

85. Peacock, "Court and Nomadic Life in Saljuq Anatolia"; see 193–

194 for an outline of his argument. For more on the complex relationships forged between the nomadic Turkmen groups and the Seljuqs of Anatolia, see also idem, "From the Balkhān-Kūhīyān to the Nāwakīya: Nomadic Politics and the Foundations of Seljūq Rule in Anatolia," in Jürgen Paul (ed.), *Nomad Aristocrats in a World of Empires* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013), 55–80. In short, "the link between the dynasty and the Turkmens was far from completely broken" (Peacock, "Court and Nomadic Life in Saljuq Anatolia," 194).

86. Peacock, "Court and Nomadic Life in Saljuq Anatolia," 193–205, 211.

87. Peacock, "Court and Nomadic Life in Saljuq Anatolia," 193–199; see 199–205 and 211 on the *ūj* or *aṭrāf*.

88. For the Great Seljuqs, Durand-Guedy has likewise argued for a reassessment that takes into account the complex relationship between the Seljuqs and the Turkmen nomads, whose presence and value may be undervalued in the sources—composed by the Persian and Arab secretarial class—but whose contributions were nevertheless a critical component in the complex and shifting military and political structures of power and allegiances forged by the Great Seljuqs; see "New Trends in the Political History of Iran under the Great Saljuqs (11th-12th Centuries)," *History Compass* 13 (2015): 321–337. In addition to an excellent and very condensed summary of scholarship on the Seljuqs, Durand-Guedy also provides a valuable simplified genealogical tree of the Seljuqs, including where the Anatolian branch and the Kirmani branches break off from the rest of the Seljuqs.

89. Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 490–491.

90. Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 491.

91. Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," 135–166, esp. 136.

92. C. E. Bosworth, R. Hillenbrand, J. M. Rogers, F. C. de Blois, and R. E. Darley-Doran, "Saldj̲ūḳids," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005), s.v.

93. For this rate of conversion and the argument that Persia had become majority-Muslim by around the year 400/1000, see Richard W.

Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); ibid., *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); ibid., "A Quantitative Approach to Medieval Muslim Biographical Dictionaries," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13 (1970): 195–211. Bulliet uses onomastic data derived from biographical dictionaries and proposes that the majority of the population had converted to Islam and that conversion had tapered off by *ca.* 400/1000. He notes that issues concerning onomastic data can be tricky, in that there are Christians and Jews with Arabic names and Muslims with non-Arabic names; however, most of these appear after ca. 300/900. Around this time, Iranian Muslims again begin to have Persian names. See also Bulliet, "Conversion Stories in Early Islam," in Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (eds.), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands: Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 123–133. Morony offers a critical assessment of Bulliet's work on the rate of conversion in Michael Morony, "The Age of Conversions: A Reassessment," in *Conversion and Continuity*, 135–150. See also Thomas Carlson's contribution to this volume, specifically discussing the Christian population of Iraq.

94. The province of Khurasan in modern-day northeastern Iran is significantly smaller than what the term meant in the early medieval period, when it included vast and ill-defined swathes of Central Asia and Afghanistan in addition to the massive region of eastern Iran. Bosworth, "Khurāsān," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005), s.v.

95. Michael Cooperson, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 99-113.

96. Zayde Antrim, "Connectivity and Creativity: Representations of Baghdad's Centrality, 3rd/9th to 5th/11th Centuries," in İsmail Safa Üstün (ed.), *İslam Medeniyetinde Bağdat (Medînetü's-Selâm) Uluslararası Sempozyum/International Symposium on Baghdad (Madinat al-Salam) in the Islamic Civilization* (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, IRCICA, 2011), 55–74. Antrim argues that "rehearing the claims to the city's centrality evoked a sense of connectivity to the Islamic umma past and present, a sense of

connectivity that was useful and compelling in legitimizing creativity and authority in the Islamic world more broadly" (56–57).

97. Michael Cooperson provides a fascinating discussion of Arabs and Iranians and the role and meaning of ethnicity during the early Abbasid period, in which he outlines the fragility, flexibility, and contingency of ethnic identities. See "'Arabs' and 'Iranians': The Uses of Ethnicity in the Early Abbasid Period," in Asad Q. Ahmed, Behnam Sadeghi, Robert G. Hoyland, and Adam Silverstein (eds.), *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 364–387.

98. Anatolian authors produced what Melville categorizes as "works of local historiography, as one would expect from a peripheral region both geographically separate and accustomed to political autonomy, yet at the same time they were composed in, and part in response to, a wider imperial context... the Mongol conquests generated an interest in historical literature that the earlier Seljuk invasions had not." Melville dates the development of a distinct historiography in Islamic Anatolia to the seventh/late-thirteenth century, when it became an important province of the Mongol Empire. Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," 136.

Afterword:
What If the Arabs Had Failed to Conquer Iran?

Richard W. Bulliet

Introduction

Counterfactual history is in vogue. Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, which is predicated on an Axis victory in World War II, has become a successful television series; and David Benioff and D.B. Weiss have announced a follow-up to their *Game of Thrones* television series that presumes successful Southern secession in the 1860s. Well-known academics have gotten into the game as well: *What If? Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* retrodicts the course of Western civilization at twenty junctures in history when the outcome of a single battle might have put its timeline on a different path.[1] A common feature of these and many other exercises of the historical imagination, however, is their focus on the West, even (or especially?) when the foe comes from a different culture. Historical turning points have occurred elsewhere, however.

Some political debates dealing with the Islamic Republic of Iran center on this question: What, if anything, of a positive nature has Islam ever contributed to Iran? This question set me to thinking about how history might have been different if the Battle of Nihavand, which took place in the mountains of western Iran sometime between the end of 639 and 642, had resulted in an Iranian rather than an Arab victory. Although the Sasanian emperor had lost his capital city, Ctesiphon, and his wealthiest province, Iraq, in the battle of Qādisiyyah in 636, his subsequent defeat at Nihavand fatefully opened the entire Iranian plateau to

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Arab occupation. Considering that no other enemy, save Alexander the Great's Macedonians, had ever conquered, or ever would conquer, the Iranian highlands and interior deserts by invasion from the west, stopping the Arabs at Nihavand probably would have established the Zagros Mountains along the border between today's Iran and Iraq as the frontier between the Muslim caliphate and whoever came to power on the plateau after Nihavand—or, to put it another way, the frontier between Islam and Iran.

The questions and hypothetical answers this counterfactual proposition calls to mind are legion. I will only address a few that precede the Mongol invasion, since the rise of Genghis Khan over 500 years later was a world historical event largely unrelated to the Arabs, the Iranians, or Islam. The Mongols would have had a profound impact on Iran's later history regardless of whether the plateau had fallen to the Arabs after Nihavand or not.

Needless to add, these conjectures have nothing to do with whether an Iranian Revolution would have broken out thirteen centuries after the Battle of Nihavand, or what the resulting Islamic Republic might be contributing, for good or ill, to Iran today.

QUESTIONS ABOUT IRAN WITHOUT ARAB RULERS

Would an Iranian kingdom or empire have retaken Iraq from the Arabs?

Probably not. In earlier times, military incursions into Mesopotamia from the Iranian plateau did give rise to long-lasting regimes, as the centuries-long rulership of the Kassites, the Achaemenids, the Parthians, and the Sasanians testify. Yet all of these successes followed periods of disunity and conflict in Mesopotamia. In the aftermath of a conjectural Arab rebuff at Nihavand, the forces of the caliphs would not have been sapped by sending large numbers of troops to Iran, and this would surely have helped them consolidate their rule over Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. Therefore, it is hard to imagine a principality, or group of principalities,

in the Iranian highlands mustering the military strength to retake Iraq, the caliphate's richest province, from such a broad and powerful empire.

Would the Sasanian ruling house have survived?

If it did, it would probably have been but one of several polities on the Iranian plateau. The Sasanian family had been torn by internecine struggles for some time before the Arabs invaded Iraq, and the loss of their capital city and its treasures would have severely weakened any emperor even if a loyal army held the Arabs at Nihavand. This is assuming, with some measure of doubt, that the Sasanian ruler, instead of a provincial Iranian noble, still commanded the imperial army after Qādisiyyah. The Sasanian homeland was in Fars province in the south-west, but an effort to recoup the dynasty's fortunes by returning there would have led, at best, to a local principality. As the Zand dynasty demonstrated in much later times, holding Fars without the resources of Iraq provides too little power to dominate all of Iran. Other parts of the highlands and Caspian seacoast had well-established families of nobles who would not necessarily have resumed allegiance to an emperor who lost Ctesiphon. One or several of these families would likely have declared themselves independent of any surviving Sasanian pretender.

Would Iran have emerged as a single country?

Prior to Ferdowsi's collecting pre-Islamic tales and historical narratives in the *Shāhnāmeh* at the turn of the eleventh century, the word *Īrānshahr* symbolically denoting an all-encompassing Iranian polity, seldom occurs in Muslim sources. Political terms denoting smaller polities, such as Khwarezm, Soghdia, and Bactria, are more common. Moreover, the Arabs referred to the Iranians collectively as *ʿajam*, meaning "people who do not speak Arabic," indicating that the Arabs did not perceive a linguistic unity among their foes. Instead, the Iranian plateau and Caspian coastlands spoke at least a dozen languages, including Pahlavi, Parthian,

Dari, Kurdish, Tati, Gilaki, Baluch, Khwarezmian, Soghdian, and Bactrian. Without a commonly understood language to enshrine it or an imperial regime to impose it, a unified political concept of Iran would not have appeared.

Would some form of New Persian have come into being?

The rise of a single language to broad dominance in lands with numerous local languages and dialects can be associated with political power, as was the case with English, which combined the pre-1066 Anglo-Saxon with the Norman French of William the Conqueror's dynasty. Alternatively, a monumental literary work, like the Qurʾān among the Arabs or Dante's *Divine Comedy* among the Italians, can confer primacy on a particular dialect. A better model for the rise of New Persian during the period of Arab rule in Iran, however, is trading necessity. This is how a simplified Bahasa Malayu/Indonesian became the easily learned and understood *lingua franca* of much of Southeast Asia. In Iran, the powerful dynasties of the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sasanians had used a single language for administration, but their spoken languages did not achieve dominance. The rise of a grammatically simplified and easily learned New Persian in early Islamic times depended not on a particular regime, but on the development of a network of Muslim merchants using the Arabic script who needed to communicate with one another across linguistic boundaries. The rise of New Persian thus closely resembles the emergence not just of Southeast Asian Bahasa, but also the Mediterranean seafarers' Lingua Franca and the Yiddish of Eastern European Jews. It was easily learned throughout the Iranian lands and utilized a distinctive writing system. But it is questionable whether a robust trading culture would have developed without Iran's inclusion in the Arab caliphate. The Iranians most likely to have spurred trading expansion in lieu of the Arabs were the Soghdians of Central Asia, whose major cities, Bukhara and Samarqand, were larger and more commercially active than the cities of the Iranian plateau. However, the Soghdian language and several

related tongues in Afghanistan did not have a unitary alphabet, but rather used several variants of the Aramaic script of Syria.

Would Zoroastrianism have continued to be Iran's main religion?

It is well attested that several religions acquired large numbers of adherents in Iran during the Sasanian era. The inscriptions of Kartir (or Kerdīr), the chief Zoroastrian priest under Emperor Shapur I, boasted of the many sects he strove to crush in Sasanian lands, including "Jews, Shamans (Buddhists), Bramans (Hindus), Christians, Nāṣrā (Nazarenes or Nazoreans), Makdags (baptists?), and Zandīgs (Manicheans)."[2] He also claimed the destruction of idols (*uzdēs*) and "dens" (*gilist*) of demons. These boasts testify to the diversity of Iran's religious culture despite royal support for a Zoroastrian cult supported by a network of fire temples and priests. It seems likely that the eclipse, or at least decapitation, of the Sasanian dynasty would have severely impacted this official cult and provided opportunities for the other religions to expand. It is also likely that Islam would have enjoyed some spread and added to Iran's diversity even if the attempted Arab conquest failed at Nihavand. Thus a Zoroastrian community would have continued, but competing faiths would have benefited from the fall of the Sasanians.

Would Iran have converted to Islam?

Just as the Sasanian Empire in its heyday welcomed Nestorian Christians who wanted to escape the religious authority of the Byzantine emperors, Iran might in time have become a refuge for Muslims rebelling against the rule of the caliphs. Dissident Muslim Kharijite or Shi'ite communities did, in fact, prosper in Iran under the caliphs in a development parallel to the growth of similar communities in parts of Algeria and Morocco that lay outside caliphal control. Without the implantation of large Arab garrisons in Balkh, Marv, Jurjan (Gorgan), and Derbent, such dissidents might have enjoyed even greater success; but the pros-

pect of a widespread wave of conversion to the Islam endorsed by the caliphate would have been dim. On the other hand, a spread of Islam along trade routes without an accompanying military conquest is well-attested in North African, Southeast Asian, and Chinese history and would probably have affected Iran in a similar fashion.

Would Iran have converted to Buddhism?

Since the Iranian plateau provided a rare meeting point of the three great proselytizing religions, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism, is it possible that Buddhism would have spread widely in Iran, as it did during the same era in Afghanistan and China? This seems more likely than a massive spread of Islam or of Christianity, assuming that the Nestorian patriarch would have continued to live in Iraq and thus been subject to caliphal authority. If the Zagros boundary had remained contested, Muslims would have been cut off from their spiritual home in Arabia, and Nestorian Christians would have been similarly cut off from the Holy Land and a goodly number of their bishoprics. By contrast, Iranian Buddhists would have enjoyed easy contact with historic communities in Afghanistan and northern India (including Pakistan) and would doubtless have seen themselves as a geographic extension of Buddhism in Central Asia and China, if not Tibet. The *barmak* ("high priest") of the Naw Bahār monastery in Balkh in northern Afghanistan enjoyed such widespread respect and influence even under the caliphs that his descendants became the most important administrators in Abbasid Baghdad. In the absence of Arab rule in the highlands, the Naw Bahār of Balkh, which seems to have had a network of daughter monasteries in Soghdia and Khurasan (northeastern Iran), might have formed the nucleus of a broader Buddhist community just as the monasteries of Dunhuang and elsewhere did in northern China in the same era.

Would Tang China have extended its imperial reach to Iran?

Tang China, the most expansive East Asian state of the era, lost a battle to a largely Arab army on the Talas River in Kazakhstan in 751. The caliphal army was part of a larger coalition that included Tibetan allies, but it is quite likely that without the Arabs, the battle would have gone the other way. In this circumstance, while the likelihood of lasting Chinese rule extending into Iran is slight given the enormous distance involved, an extension of Chinese trading and cultural influences would be quite likely. Soghdia and Khurasan (northeastern Iran) would then have emerged as the most dynamic of the highland regions. If western Iran had remained aloof to a growing Buddhist-Chinese cultural orientation, and the Zagros frontier had remained contested, Mesopotamia might even have lost its primacy as the western terminus of the Silk Road. The vast Scandinavian hoards of Muslim coins minted in northeastern Iran that testify to the volume and vitality of trade routes connecting northern Europe to Central Asia via the Volga, Don, and other rivers of Russia might have taken the form of Soghdian or Chinese coinage rather than Muslim dirhams. It is also possible that the western reaches of the Silk Road would have bypassed Iran, shifting to the north of the Caspian Sea and terminating on the northern coast of the Black Sea, as they later did in the Mongol era.

Would cotton have changed the economic base of Iranian agriculture?

The emergence of cotton as the primary export from the Iranian plateau was a major development in Iran after the Arab conquests.[3] This development follows (and arguably depends) upon the post-Nihavand migration of Yemeni Arabs, who were familiar with cotton farming, and the consolidation of caliphal rule there, it seems likely that wheat and barley would have continued to dominate the agriculture of the highlands. Lacking the industrial base provided by the cotton textile industry, the cities that burgeoned under Arab dominion would have remained

comparatively small, and political life would have continued to revolve around the manors of rural landlords, the so-called *dihqān*s. An alternative history might have seen cotton cultivation spread into Iran from Soghdia, where it was grown in limited amounts in river valleys in pre-Islamic times. This, however, would have required enormous investment in underground canals (*qanat*s). If the Arabs had been defeated at Nihavand, this investment, which involved both the expenditure of resources seized during the conquest and an Arab desire to become landowners through bringing desert land under production, would probably not have been available.

Would Iran have urbanized?

Without cotton, foothill cities surrounding Iran's central deserts, including Nishapur, Sabzavar, Semnan, Bistam, Rayy, Qazvin, Qom, Yazd, and Kerman, are unlikely to have acquired enough demographic and economic power to compete with the traditionally dominant regions that had more water for agriculture, places like Shiraz, Isfahan, and Hamadhan. The ruling class of Iran would therefore have continued to consist of rural landowners exploiting self-sufficient farming villages within a generally autarkic economic system. Most cities would have continued to be modest in size (5,000–15,000) and focused less on industrial production than on administrative and garrison functions relating to taxation and caravan trade, particularly along the Silk Road.

QUESTIONS ABOUT ISLAM WITHOUT INPUT FROM IRAN

Would the ḥadīth *have gained such great importance in Islam without the Iranian collectors?*

The compilers of the six universally accepted Sunni collections of "sound" or authentic *ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad), along with Ahmad b. Hanbal, whose collection is also highly respected, all had roots in Iran, some having Arab family lineages and others Iranian. The

same holds for the four *ḥadīth* collections most respected by Shi'ah Muslims. By contrast, the Muslim west, North Africa, and Andalusia, produced no compiler of equivalent stature and relied most heavily on the collection of Malik b. Anas, who lived in Medina in Arabia. Quantitative studies by Richard Bulliet and Maxim Romanov also show that a vastly disproportional number of *ḥadīth* scholars lived in Iraq and Iran during the first six centuries of Islam.[4] Though the reason for this regional disparity is hard to pin down, it is probably related to the growth of trade with Iran, since scholars traveling in search of Prophetic lore usually supported themselves by commerce, and to the conversion to Islam of large numbers of Iranians who knew next to nothing about the customs of the Arabs, which underlie many *ḥadīth*. The North African devotion to the authority of Malik demonstrates that even without this Iranian contribution, *ḥadīth* would have been influential in guiding Muslims in their day-to-day lives; but the diversity and conflicts among *ḥadīth* reports that over the centuries triggered many of the legal and theological debates in Islam would doubtless have been greatly limited.

Would Islam have developed a second language to complement Arabic?

It has often been remarked that Iran was the only early Islamic land to retain a native language throughout the process of conversion to Islam and to Islamicize that language by adopting the Arabic alphabet and a tremendous number of Arabic words. Egypt, whose native tongue was almost as remote linguistically from Arabic as were the various Middle Persian languages of Iran, retained Coptic only for Christian religious purposes, but otherwise adopted Arabic. In time, Persian approached co-equal religious status with Arabic among some Muslim communities, particularly in India and China. If the Arabs had been defeated at Nihavand, however, New Persian would not have become a Muslim vernacular, much less a language suitable for profound and inspiring Muslim religious texts. Though several Turkic languages did achieve a religiously elevated status in the post-Mongol period, they did so on the model of New Persian. Moreover, it is not at all certain that Turkic peoples would have

become as important in Islam since their homelands would not have come under Arab rule without a victory at Nihavand. It seems likely, therefore, that Arabic would have taken on enhanced prestige as the sole sacred language of Muslims.

Would trends in Islamic culture have been radically different without the likes of Avicenna, al-Bīrūnī, al-Ghazālī, Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, et al.?

Enormous contributions to Islamic thought and letters came from the pens of people born and educated in Iran who wrote in Arabic. Many of them worked in Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, but there is no reason to assume that a Baghdad capable of attracting highly talented Iranians would have developed without the post-Nihavand extension of Arab rule onto the Iranian plateau. The narrow waist of Iraq where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers most closely converge has been an obvious city site since Babylonian times, but the impetus to build the great metropolis of Baghdad came from an Abbasid movement that rose in Iran and seized power in 750 from the Umayyad caliphs ruling in Damascus. Reducing a hypothetical Baghdad equivalent to a mere provincial capital, with a contested frontier with Iran not far to its east, would probably have enhanced the importance of Syria and Egypt. Thus it would not have been a magnet for authors and thinkers, whether from Iran or elsewhere, who sought the patronage of an imperial court. Nor is it likely that Iranian written works composed in pre-Islamic times, like *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, would have been translated into Arabic.

Would the madrasah have become the institutional basis of Muslim higher education?

The first schools of higher Muslim learning referred to in Arabic sources as *madrasah*s ("places of study") are attested in northeastern Iran in the late 900s. They do not appear in Baghdad until the mid-1000s, and they reach Syria, Egypt, and Arabia a century or more later. Hence they must be considered an Iranian institutional contribution to Islamic

thought and learning, possibly modeled on pre-Islamic Buddhist monasteries. Nevertheless, it is more than likely that large mosques would have taken over this educational function, as they did in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. The primacy of Iran in the systematizing Islamic education, therefore, relates more to its early chronology than to a specific institutional form.

Would the Muslims have conquered Constantinople?

The Umayyad Caliphate launched several major military expeditions against Byzantine Constantinople, and the Abbasid caliphs made attempts of their own, though with less success. If the strength of the Arab armies had not been distributed so widely to the east of Iraq, however, it is possible that a land and/or sea invasion from Syria and Egypt would have seized this great capital in the eighth century and thereby set in motion the conversion to Islam of Anatolia. In this scenario, the Muslim territory now called Turkey would have come into being without any Turks.

Would Syria and Egypt have become the primary centers of Islam?

The Arab armies that sallied forth from Arabia in the generation after the death of Muḥammad focused their efforts in two directions: Syria and Egypt to the north, and Iraq to the northeast. When the Umayyad dynasty transferred the caliphal ruling authority away from Arabia after 661, they moved it to Damascus; and Syria is where it remained until the Abbasid movement coming from Iran overthrew the Umayyads in 750. With the Abbasids ensconced in their new capital of Baghdad, Syria and Egypt became politically and economically neglected, as did North Africa to an even greater extent. The reemergence of Syria and Egypt as major centers of Muslim power and culture began in the twelfth century when Iran was beset by political, economic, and climatic decline. The Mongol invasion of the following century cemented a cleavage along the Zagros mountain frontier between a Muslim east in Iran and beyond and a Muslim west centered on Syria and Egypt. It is likely, therefore,

that in the absence of Arab rule on the Iranian plateau, Syria and Egypt would have developed as major Muslim religious centers at a substantially earlier date, and thus have shifted the history of the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea in a different direction.

Conclusions

Without an Arab victory at Nihavand, Iran would have become a largely non-Muslim land of diverse religions and similar but discrete languages where local polities competed for control over an economy centered on self-sufficient agriculture, landowning aristocrats, and sleepy cities of no substantial size. Influences from India, China, and various Buddhist sources would have eclipsed those from Iraq and the Muslim west. In short, the greatness that Iranians associate with their national heritage derives in substantial part from the incorporation of what we now define as geographical Iran into the Arab caliphate and, consequently, into the Muslim world community.

By the same token, the Muslim caliphate without Iran would have flourished in comparison with the other polities in the Mediterranean basin, though Iraq would have played a lesser role in its politics and cultural affairs than Syria and Egypt. Nevertheless, in the longer run of Islamic history, the lack of an easy path to eastward expansion would have drastically limited the growth of the Muslim community and made likely an even greater emphasis on Arabic and the Arabs as the primary vehicles for shaping the lives of the Muslim faithful.

In sum, regardless of what one thinks of the role of Islam in Iran today, a conjectural history in which a Muslim Arab empire failed to extend its power across the Iranian plateau would have seen Iranian social, economic, political, and religious developments proceed along radically different pathways—indeed, pathways that might well have seen the disappearance of Iran as the embodiment of a territorial concept.

Notes

All digital content cited in this article was last accessed via the URLs provided in the notes below on January 13, 2021.

1. Robert Cowley (ed.), *What If? Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1999).

2. Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Kartīr," *Encyclopædia Iranica* ((https://iranicaonline.org/articles/kartir; originally published December 15, 2011).

3. See Richard Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran: A Moment in World History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

4. Idem, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Maxim Romanov, "Computational Reading of Arabic Biographical Collections with Special Reference to Preaching in the Sunnī World (661–1300 CE)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2013).

About the Authors

Richard W. Bulliet is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History of Columbia University in the City of New York.

Thomas A. Carlson is Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern History at Oklahoma State University. His research explores Christianity, Islam, and religious diversity in the medieval Middle East. His book *Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq* is published by Cambridge University Press (2018). He is also a former editor of the *Syriac Gazetteer* (http://syriaca.org/geo/ index.html), and is developing a digital reference work to document the religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in the medieval Middle East.

Touraj Daryaee is the Maseeh Chair in Persian Studies and Culture and the Director of the Dr. Samuel M. Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture at the University of California, Irvine. His research focuses on the ancient and early medieval history of Iran, specifically the Sasanian Empire. He has worked on Middle Persian literature, editing and translating several texts with commentary on geography, dinner speech, chess, and backgammon. He is also interested in the history of Zoroastrianism in Late Antiquity and its encounter with Islam. He is the editor of the *Name-ye Iran-e Bastan: The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies* as well as the electronic journal *DABIR: Digital Archives of Brief Notes and Iran Review* and *Sasanika: Late Antique Near East Project*. His articles have appeared both in English and Persian in *Iranian Studies*, *Iran*, *Iranistik*, *Studia Iranica*, *Res Orientalis*, *Historia*, *Electrum*, *Indo-Iranian Journal*, *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, *Iranshenasi*, *Iran Nameh*, *Name-ye Baharestan*, and *Name-ye Iran-e Bastan*. His books include *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (I. B. Tauris, 2009) and *From Oxus to Euphrates: The World of Late*

Antique Iran (Jordan Center for Persian Studies, 2017). He is also the editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Mimi Hanaoka is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Richmond, where she teaches Islam and Islamic history. Her first book, *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), explains themes and literary strategies that "centered" texts from "peripheral" regions in medieval Persia. Her current research project investigates the ways in which Muslim reformists in Iran and South Asia approached Japan as a non-Western model of modernity and educational reform during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Jesús Lorenzo Jiménez holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of the Basque Country (2008). His main research field is the study of the first centuries of al-Andalus in close connection with the rest of the Islamic world. He is the author of a monograph entitled *La Dawla de los Banû Qasî. Origen, auge y caída de una dinastía muladí en la Frontera Superior de al-Andalus* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones científicas, 2010), as well as several articles published in international journals.

Jason Mokhtarian is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University, where he teaches Jewish and Iranian Studies. He is the author of the book *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings, and Priests: The Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), which was named a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award, as well as numerous articles on the history of the Jews of pre-Islamic Persia. He is currently working on two book projects—one on talmudic medicine, and the other a sweeping history of the Jews of Persia from antiquity to the present.

Michael Pregill (B.A. Columbia University, 1993; M.T.S. Harvard Divinity School, 1997; Ph.D., Columbia University, 2007) is Interlocutor in the Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations at Boston University and coordinator of the Mizan digital scholarship initiative. His primary area of

expertise is early Islam, with a specific focus on the Qurʾān and its interpretive tradition (*tafsīr*). Much of his research concerns the reception and interpretation of biblical, Jewish, and Christian themes and motifs in *tafsīr* and other branches of classical Islamic literature; critical approaches to Islamic origins; and the perception and representation of Jews and Christians in Islamic culture.

Shai Secunda occupies the Jacob Neusner Chair in the History and Theology of Judaism at Bard College. He researches and teaches classical Judaism and Zoroastrianism and their late antique interrelations. His first book, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli Talmud in its Sasanian Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) was recently released in paperback. In addition to academic publications, he regularly writes on Jewish scholarship and popular culture for the *Jewish Review of Books*.

Isabel Toral-Niehoff (Ph.D. Tübingen 1997) is scientific coordinator at the University of Mainz and has taught at the Freie Universität Berlin in the Department of Arabic Studies since 2008. She has also held various research positions and fellowships in Freiburg, Berlin, London (Marie Curie Fellowship), and Göttingen. Her main publishing and research fields are Arabia and the Near East in Late Antiquity; cultural identity and cultural contact/translation; the Arabic occult sciences; *adab*, fiction, and encyclopaedias; and al-Andalus.

Note on Cover Image

A fateful exchange marking the end of an era. Here, as depicted in the *Shāhnāmeh* of Ferdowsī, Rustam, the champion of the Sasanian emperor Yazdagird III, receives the envoy of Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, Companion of the Prophet and head of the Arab expeditionary force sent to invade Iraq in 636. Saʿd's envoy brings Rostam a letter inviting him to accept Islam, which Rostam rejects; subsequently he is killed at the battle of Qādisiyyah in personal combat with Saʿd, and the defeat of Sasanian forces there spells the end of Sasanian rule in Iraq. Detail, *Rostam Receives the envoy of Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ*, from the so-called "Small Freer *Shāhnāmeh*" (Ilkhanid Iraq or Iran, 14th c.)

MIZAN MISSION STATEMENT

Mizan is a digital initiative dedicated to encouraging informed public discourse and interdisciplinary scholarship on the culture and history of Muslim societies. We provide a platform for exploring and engaging with important topics that pertain to Muslim societies past and present.

Mizan is dedicated to fostering public scholarship and supporting and promoting research on Muslim societies across the world. We bring a fair, unbiased perspective to bear on current events and contemporary debates concerning all aspects of Islamic history, religion, and culture. We seek to encourage and contribute to informed public discourse by providing academic resources and accessible commentary on subjects of contemporary relevance and abiding significance.

The Mizan initiative is distinguished by the broad-ranging interdisciplinary approaches we foster; the scholarly expertise we bring to commentary on current events and the study of the Islamic world; and the breadth of cultural expressions from Muslim societies we investigate, commemorate, and celebrate. We seek to make research into the background to Islam's emergence as a global civilization and the history, texts, and classic cultural expressions of Muslim identity relevant for a contemporary audience. Features and articles on Mizan bridge past and present, drawing classical literature, visual culture, law, and devotional forms into conversation with the popular culture of modern Muslim societies.

We seek to approach the history and culture of Muslim societies in an unbiased way, without preference for any sectarian perspective, and to avoid essentialism and the privileging of any particular orthodoxy or orthopraxy. We seek to promote an appreciation for transregional and cosmopolitan perspectives, as well as pluralism and open dialogue. By fostering objective, responsible, balanced discussion and scholarly inquiry, we seek to contribute to improving online discourse about Muslim societies and culture.